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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

GRAMMAR AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis beings with a brief discussion of A.J. Ayer's failed attempt to show that religious discourse is meaningless because central claims such as "God exists" are not empirical in nature. It then moves to a consideration of D.Z. Phillips' account of religious language wherein, rather than there being one general rule for the meaningfulness of a given claim or statement, each "language-game" or mode of discourse is seen as having its own criteria for meaning and meaningfulness. Phillips agrees that "God exists" is not an empirical claim, but sees this as leading to different conclusions than those reached by Ayer. The work of Ian Ramsey is next considered, and the various strengths and weaknesses of his "broadened empiricism" are discussed, and his work is compared with that of Phillips.

In Chapter Two the notion of a "grammatical claim", as developed by Stuart Brown, is presented, and it is argued that such claims are not to be identified with analytic claims or empirical claims. The various characteristics of empirical claims are presented and discussed, and it is argued that "God exists" is such a claim. It is furthered argued that conceptual or grammatical differences are not simply brute differences between world views, but can be reasonably and rationally discussed.

In Chapter Three a teleological account of religious discourse is sketched in outline, and it is claimed that the Christian religion is not in certain sorts of conflict with the claims of science. In general, religious claims are acts of language performed in the service of different objectives than the objectives of science, and this is why there is no conflict. This is what is meant when it is claimed that religion "has a different grammar" from science.

In Chapter Four the work of D.Z. Phillips is further examined and

found wanting in certain respects. His contrast of the "referential" and the "expressive" causes distortion when it comes to Christianity's being "about how things are", it is argued, and this distortion is a result of Phillips' failure to understand the notion of a grammatical claim broadly enough.

In the last chapter some general remarks about the "conception of the world" which one finds in Christianity, and how such a conception of reality is itself a response to less adequate conceptions, precede a summary of the major claims argued for in the thesis.

PREFACE

The point of this thesis is to shed light on what it is that religious believers are doing and talking about in the practice of their faiths. In so short a work I do not mean to discuss very many examples in any detail. Rather, I will focus on the logical and epistemological status of religious uses of language. The two naive questions to which I mean to give general answers are "How is religious talk, practice, belief different from other sorts of talk, practice, and belief?" and "How is it related to the world?". More time is spent on the first question than on the second, and in so far as any light is shed at all at this level of great generality most of the important insights do not originate with me. Nevertheless, I hope there is value in the placing together and connecting of others' insights, some value in "the assembling of reminders".

Two key terms are never defined. The first of these is "language", which I use pretty much interchangeably with "discourse". While in one trivial sense there is no such thing as "religious language", but only religious uses of Sanskrit, Swahili, Russian, English, etc., the term has become standard philosophical fare: I use it as an abbreviation for "religious uses of language". In as much as the term "discourse" has a tendency to suggest merely talking, and scholarly talking at that, the term "language", because of its associations with phrases such as "language-game", may be better used to invoke the whole social context of a given speech-act. It is such contexts which I have in mind, and this is not a thesis "merely about words", but an attempt to describe--in words!--how we act and what our actions and beliefs amount to.

The other key term used herein is, of course, "religious". My religious experience (and here I am <u>not</u> talking about mystical moments) is almost wholly limited to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and mostly

to the Protestant side of that. Most often I have this in mind when I speak of "religion", but I hope my conclusions are applicable more widely. Etymologically "religion" has to do with the "performance of rites", but I do not see religious practice and belief as separable since most relitions employ linguistic formulations as an integral part of any rites. To rightly study the logic of the language is to study the understanding of the rite or practice. Again, my fundamental concern is with the relation of human thought and "the world".

The structure of this work may reflect more of my biography than it ought, in that it moves through the basic issues it addresses pretty much in the way in which I came to terms with them. Were I able at this time to improve it further I would, but since I cannot I hope the reader will bear with its organizational inadequacies. Perhaps a few remarks about the general argument will help at this point.

The philosophers whose views I discuss were chosen partly due to the intrinsic merit of their work, partly because they have been controversially influential, and partly because of where I see them fitting into a topology of the field. I hope I have been fair in representing their views. In Chapter One I discuss the views of three philosophers who, with respect to their views and assumptions about meaning, represent two extremes and something of a compromise attempt (though a less than explicit one). In Chapters Two and Three I discuss certain questions which none of the philosophers discussed in Chapter One answered very satisfactorily. Central here is a concern with distinguishing religion and science, and in each chapter I attempt this from a logically different standpoint. In Chapter Two I argue that very fundamental religious claims about God are not, as they have often been taken to be, empirical claims, but are a quite different sort of claim, a sort which I, after Wittgenstein, call "grammatical". In Chapters Three and Four I try to back up the different claim that religious belief has "a different grammar" from scientific belief. What I say is only suggestive, necessarily so in a short work for it is part of my view that showing what "a different grammar" is involves the detailed discussion of parti-

cular cases. "Grammatical claims" then, as I hope will be clear, are a particular kind of claim whose characteristics are described in Chapter Two, while "a difference in grammar" is a difference in the logical structure of two or more claims or modes of discourse, a difference, as it were, in categories. In Chapter Four the focus narrows back to the consideration of a particular author, but here too I have more than simply interest in his work as motivation, for I want to show <u>through</u> a discussion of a philosophical account which is overtly similar to mine both how it is really quite different <u>and</u> more about "the different grammar" also discussed in Chapter Three.

Behind much of what I say lurks the general account of our language and knowledge given by Ludwig Wittgenstein. I hope my work is both in line with his general views and a manifestation of his views on the nature of philosophy, but this is secondary to my hope that what I have said about religion may be both instructive and largely true.

There are many people to whom I owe thanks for being able to complete this work. My father, E.M. Checkland, taught me a religion, and taught me also that it was not ridiculous in the ways many, both opponents and defenders, would make it. My thesis supervisor, Professor Richard Bosley, showed a rare combination of patience and insight in shepherding me as far as I have come. It would be hard for me to overestimate the value of his influence on my ability to think philosophically, as well as on particular philosophical views. My fellow student Sue Campbell provided useful criticism of this thesis as well as moral support, and many other students and professors have contributed greatly to the clarification of my thinking. With regard to the writing of this thesis Professors Allen Carlson and Roger Shiner provided much useful criticism. And my wife Beth forever reminds me that there is more to life than is dreamed of in any philosophy, and happily so.

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CHAPTER ONE

THREE VIEWS OF RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

> When on a Sunday morning we hear the bells ringing we ask ourselves: is it possible! this is going on because of a Jew crucified 2,000 years ago who said he was the son of God. The proof of such an assertion is lacking. --Friedrich Nietzsche

In this chapter I want to discuss three positions which, with respect to a philosophical account of religious language and practices, could be said to represent two poles and an attempt to stake out middle ground. I think that all three are deficient in some respects and I hope to show how in some detail, both in this chapter and throughout the thesis.

(i) A.J. Ayer

An extreme position with regard to the status of religious discourse is that of the logical positivists, who hold that it is meaningless. They see it as closely related to metaphysics which is their paradigm of illicit philosophy.

> Metaphysical utterances were condemned not for being emotive, which could hardly be considered as objectionable in itself, but for pretending to be cognitive, for masquerading as something that they were not.[1]

I will take A.J. Ayer's statement of the positivist position, as found in Language, Truth and Logic,[2] as representative of the main tenets of positivism with regard to meaning and truth.

The core of Ayer's position is the verification principle and the assumptions which support it. It has been stated as a slogan in the form "the meaning of a proposition is its method of verfication". This means that any statement that is not verifiable is not meaningful, does not express a proposition. Ayer formulates the principle as requiring

"...of a literally meaningful statement, which is not analytic, that it should be either directly or indirectly verifiable...."[3] These latter terms are explained as follows:

> I propose to say that a statement is directly verifiable if it is either itself an observation-statement, or is such that in conjunction with one or more observation-statements it entails at least one observation-statement which is not deducible from these other premises alone: and I propose that a statement is directly verifiable if it satisfies the following conditions: first, that in conjunction with certain other premises it entails one or more directly verifiable statements which are not deducible from these other premises alone: and secondly, that these other premises do not include any statement that is not either analytic, or directly verifiable, or capable of being independently established as indirectly verifiable.[4]

Ayer thought that these criteria were sufficient to debar religious uses of language from meaningful discourse, and to debar metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics, too. (Metaphysics is, of course, the primary target, the other birds falling more or less incidentally to Ayer's one stone.) This is shown by his criticism of the possibility of religious knowledge; the only "religious" claim he examines is the claim that "God exists", which is more characteristically a philosophical or metaphysical claim than a religious one. It does not, to my knowledge, occur in the Bible, nor can I ever recall hearing it in church.[5]

"God exists" cannot be certainly true, says Ayer, for only tautologies are certainly true and they, while meaningful, are "informationally vacuous". Since the statement "God exists" obviously means to give information it must be, Ayer reasons, an empirical claim. As such, not only can it never be certain, it is not even probable because it is not meaningful. It is not meaningful because it is neither directly nor indirectly verifiable.[6]

On such an analysis "...there is no logical ground for antagonism between religion and natural science"[7] since religious utterances are not propositions and, therefore, "...cannot stand in any logical relation to the propositions of science". ("Logical" here must mean something like "is implied by", "is contradicted by", etc.: as we shall see in the next section, there are other uses of "logic".) It is clear that a cer-

tain account of science is presupposed by Ayer, namely, that it consists of literal claims which are verifiable in one of his two senses. But as C.G. Hempel has documented,[8] every attempt to draw the meaningful/meaningless distinction such that science was the former and metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, and religion were the latter has been demolished by counter-example. Moreover, it began to become clear that a good many scientific claims did not satisfy Ayer's criteria for meaningfulness, and an account of language that allowed next to no utterances as meaningful began to look suspect. It soon became clear of the positivists that "...in actual fact they had no machinery such as they thought they had, by which the senselessness of metaphysics could be proved...."[9] Attempts to talk of statements as capable of being <u>in some degree</u> confirmed or disconfirmed by observation were both uncharacteristically vague and of little help in eliminating the dread metaphysics.

Through the work of Paul Feyerabend, Thomas Kuhn, Norwood Hanson, and others a broader philosophical view of science has emerged, one that can account for the intimate relation between what is discovered by scientists and what they are looking for, and one which sees science as not simply a matter between observer and nature, but as social and historical as well. I cannot, of course, discuss these issues here (though I will have a bit more to say in section iv). I only wish to point out that positivism, as a philosophical movement, was not refuted by knock-down argument, but died a rather more Kuhnian death. This is partly because it got at, however simplistically, something important:

> It must in fairness be said that the positivist critique of philosophical language has the merit of making perspicuous the unique position occupied by the sentences of metaphysics.[10]

While this is perhaps a bit overstated--things are not all <u>that</u> clear--it is true that positivism drew attention to metaphysics and stimulated valuable work on the nature of factual or empirical claims, and by its failures drew attention to the nature of scientific explanation and discourse. For those who thought Ayer's analysis inadequate an implicit question was raised: what is it for a claim to be "about how things are",

and are religious claims this?

Positivism is an extreme development out of the tradition of empiricism which comes from Locke and Hume, and it shares the basic assumption that all human knowledge is "built up" by inference from sensory experience.[11] But other approaches besides positivism have been tried in the empiricist tradition, and I will discuss one of these in section iii. In the next section I will discuss the views of a philosopher who, while he agrees with Ayer that metaphysics is based on confusion and error, thinks that this is so for different reasons, and that these reasons entail the rejection of empiricism.

(ii) D.Z. Phillips

The account of language in general, and religious language in particular, put forward by D.Z. Phillips is, with respect to the question of meaning, so different from that of Ayer that it could be said to represent the opposite extreme. Whereas for Ayer there is one general criterion of meaningfulness to which all uses of language must submit, Phillips holds that each mode of discourse contains its own criteria of meaning and meaningfulness. He sees it as:

> ...a necessary prolegomenon to the philosophy of religion ...to show the diversity of the criteria of rationality; to show that the distinction between the real and the unreal does not come to the same thing in every context.[12]

On this point and many others Phillips claims to be following Wittgenstein;[13] so perhaps a brief overview of Wittgenstein's views on language would be appropriate, especially since Phillips often just assumes such familiarity.

In his early works Wittgenstein presented views which were, in some respects, like those of the positivists. In the Tractatus, for instance, we find great emphasis on fact-stating, or picturing, as the function of language.[14] Words are seen as names on this view. But by the early '30's, in the Blue Book, one finds Wittgenstein recommending that we replace the question "What is the meaning of a word?", which produces in us a "mental cramp", with the question "What is the explanation of meaning?". About the same time he made the oft-quoted recommendation,

"Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use". The notion of "use" here has the initial advantage of not suggesting a corresponding substantive--the meaning--which has to be found. Besides this, it forces one to look at broader linguistic and social contexts than simply the sentence, something positivism rarely did. Once this step is taken it becomes clear that "Language is not defined for us an an arrangement fulfilling one definite purpose. Rather 'language' is for us a name for a collection".[15] Thus, the assumption that the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands--still alive in phenomenalist form in Ayerian positivism--gives way to an "instrumental" or pragmatic conception of language. But the notion that meaning is use can also mislead, for language is not like other tools or instruments. One can easily make it look as if language were simply a means of attaining ends which could be understood and desired without language. While this is certainly true of <u>some</u> uses of language, it is not, in general, an accurate picture of how language is for us. Our language is intimately related to our understanding: many of the "ends" of language are not intelligible, and certainly not specifiable, prior to the use of language. This includes such important ends as "giving a name" or "picking out a colour".[16]

If read too narrowly, then, the notion of meaning as use can be seriously misleading. Functioning as something of a counter-balance to this tendency is Wittgenstein's account of rules and rule-governed activities. Our talk is a species of rule-governed behaviour because it makes a difference which words we use at which times:

> Can I say 'bububu' and mean 'If it doesn't rain I shall go for a walk'?--It is only in a language that I can mean something by something. This shews clearly that the grammar of 'to mean' is not like that of the expression 'to imagine' and the like.[17]

But this raises the question of what is involved in following a rule. It is not possible that following a rule be the sort of thing which one person did once in human history, says Wittgenstein: "To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess are customs (uses, institutions)".[18] That is, all such activities presuppose and are part of a social form of life, and <u>that</u> implies a certain regularity

in responses to situations from those who live such a life. This agreement in responses among human beings is what Wittgenstein calls "agreement in form of life".[19] This is not unanimity of opinion, but rather the basic degree of similarity in our responses and reactions which makes us normal human beings, and it is the substratum on which our social practices, including language, rest.[20] Ultimately our practices cannot be supported by reasons, and of course the giving of reasons itself depends upon the acquisition of linguistic skills which presuppose "... that one has already mastered a technique".[21] At a certain level the ultimate response is just "That's what we do".

I realize that this is very summary, but I hope it will suffice by way of background. What follows from Wittgenstein's general account of human language is not, as regards religious language and practice, immediately clear, and I shall spend a good deal of time considering the work of D.Z. Phillips, who claims to be applying Wittgenstein to religion. But before I turn to Phillips' work I would like, by way of further background, to discuss very briefly Peter Winch's attempt to answer "the important question of the relation between practice and belief in religious contexts".[22] Winch means to be following Wittgenstein when he answers this question.

The fact that one, although ignorant of Buddhist doctrine, can make some use of the distinction between a devout and non-devout Buddhist in practice is, Winch thinks, very important in recognizing Buddhism as a religion. "I want to suggest that what makes a belief a 'religious' belief can be best understood by investigating the roots in religious practice of the concepts at work in religious belief."[23] Winch believes that "...religious practices are not, at bottom, informed by beliefs".[24] Rather, there is a two-way influence between practice and belief and it makes sense to say, in some cases at least, that practice is as fundamental as belief and perhaps even prior. To say, for instance, of certain tribesmen that:

> 'They look to the mountains in order to show reverence to their gods' is not to explain why they look to the mountains, but to point to a conceptual connection between what they understand

> by their gods and their ritualistic practice. (Of course, this does not mean that what they understand by their gods will have no other conceptual connections.)[25]

According to Winch, then, the term "gods" here cannot be given sense, cannot be really understood independently of the tribesmen's practice of looking towards the mountains. Such behaviour is, Winch claims "...a primitive human response to certain characteristic human situations and predicaments".[26] It can take a wide variety of forms, but philosophers need to be wary of assuming, as Ayer does, that what is said in religious contexts is logically akin to theories about the nature of things such as those we find in science. In the case of prayer, for instance, "'Making requests of x'...is not a function which retains the same sense whether 'God' or some name or description of a human being is substituted for 'x'".[27] I will have occasion later on[28] to discuss this idea in some detail, but here I would like to underscore my agreement with the insight which lies behind Winch's point. It comes from Wittgenstein:

> In the use of words one might distinguish 'surface grammar' from 'depth grammar'. What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the construction of the sentence, the part of its use--one might say--that can be taken in by the ear.--And now compare the depth grammar, say of the word 'to mean', with what its surface grammar would lead us to suspect. No wonder we find it difficult to know our way about.[29]

One gets at the depth grammar, whether of "prayer" or any other expression, by studying the criteria of what it is to use the word correctly, and why <u>it</u> is used rather than some other word. This should always involve looking to see what people actually do and say rather than assuming that one already knows, for the latter leads to oversimplification and category mistakes.

The point of this rather long preamble is to set a philosophical context for the work of D.Z. Phillips. His work cannot be fully understood without some reference to Wittgenstein, not simply because he follows Wittgenstein, but because very often he takes Wittgenstein to stand in no need of explication and merely refers one to various passages. Sometimes Phillips does not even do this, but merely assumes some view on a given matter, taking it to be Wittgenstein's. But my concern is

not really with the relationship between Phillips' account of religious discourse. Hence, I will say only as much as seems minimally necessary about how accurately Phillips represents and/or expands on his avowed guiding light. A good deal can be said about Phillips' own views without extensive discussion of Wittgenstein.

Phillips has raised a point very similar to that of Winch with regard to grammar. In discussing the reality of God he has said that the assumption that this is an empirical issue rests on a misunderstanding of the logic of the word "God".[30] It makes no sense, he says, to say that God might not exist.

> When the positivist claims that there is no God because God cannot be located, the believer does not object on the grounds that the investigation has not been thorough enough, but on the grounds that the investigation fails to understand the grammar of what is being investigated--namely, the reality of God.[31]

The grammar of the word "God" is not like that of physical object statements. Rather,

> ...to ask a question about the reality of God is to ask a question about a kind of reality, not about the reality of this or that, much in the same way as asking a question about the reality of physical objects is not to ask about the reality of this or that physical object.[32]

Rather than there being one general criterion for what is meaningful,

> (t)he criteria of what can be sensibly said of God are to be found within the religious tradition....It follows ...that the criteria of meaningfulness cannot be found outside religion, since they are given by religious discourse itself.[33]

And from this it follows, says Phillips, that "...God's divinity cannot be justified by external considerations. If we can see nothing in it, there is nothing apart from it which will somehow establish its point".[34] To say this implies that all natural theology is a mistake, and that a good deal of philosophical discussion of religious issues is based on an ill-conceived view of what is involved. Phillips thinks this is traceable to a tendency to see all discourse as factual, but in what I have quoted so far we have largely a series of suggestive spatial metaphors ("inside"/"outside", "external", etc.), and much more needs to be

said. In Chapter Three I will offer a teleological account of the various modes of discourse, an account which, I hope, further amplifies the insight behind these spatial metaphors.

If an account such as Phillips' is to hold up, a distinction between religion and superstition must be introduced and maintained. If it is not, religion is either in danger of conflicting with science or it must be maintained that even superstitions have their own criteria of meaning, something Phillips does not want. Superstition is for him bad science and logic; it has two characteristics which religion lacks. The first of these is "trust in non-existent, quasi-causal connections", and the second, when superstition occurs in an ostensibly religious context, is the using of religion "as a means to ends which are intelligible without reference to" religion.[35] The first condition is pretty much, I take it, what the ordinary man would say about superstitions, and the phrase "non-existent, quasi-causal connections" raises no issues which scientific methodologies cannot handle for now. The second condition is meant to bring out the difference between the following two cases: (1) a young mother brings her new child before the statue of the Virgin asking for the Holy Mother's blessing "as one way among others of securing certain ends", namely her child's well-being; and (2) a young mother's act is one of veneration and thanksgiving, of wonder and gratitude. In the superstitious case the protection gained determines whether the holiness has been efficacious; in the religious case the "holiness determines the nature of the protection",[36] i.e. the mother takes the Virgin to be the paradigm of the virtues she wants her child to embody, which virtues she requires herself to properly raise her child. Indeed, talk of "protection" seems misplaced in such a case, or else the word is used in a quite different sense from that of the former case.

Phillips does not deny that some ostensibly "religious" practices turn out to be superstitious when analysed. What he denies is that all religious beliefs can be accounted for in this way. He has criticized John Hick for believing that "the kind of difference religion makes to life is the difference between a set of empirical facts being or not being the case".[37] That is, he thinks that Hick is wrong in holding

that the believer's hope lies in certain facts being realized. Rather, it is a matter of being able to continue, no matter what. Hick's view utterly fails to account for the difference between worshipping an eternal God and believing in one which may or may not exist, and this, says Phillips, is crucial. "It seems to me clear that there is no question of finding out, where the reality of God is concerned."[38] This is, of course, what Ayer thought, and he went on to conclude that, since there is no finding out, "God"-talk is meaningless.[39] It does seem right that no occurrence--including the literal happening of everything in the book of Revelation--could confirm (or disconfirm) the reality of the Christian concept of God. This is a powerful reason for seeing the question of God's existence (reality) as other than an empirical claim. But if it is not empirical what sort of claim is it? Or is Ayer right that it isn't a claim at all?

Phillips tries to sketch an answer to these questions by drawing on Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Religious Belief".[40] He follows what Wittgenstein says there in holding that a believer and non-believer do not contradict each other. As Winch implied, "belief" amounts to something different in religious contexts than merely "assent to propositions": "...the difference between a man who does and a man who doesn't believe in God is like the difference between a man who does and a man who does not believe in a picture".[41] But what is it to "believe in a picture", since we do not usually speak this way?

> Believing in the picture means, for example putting one's trust in it, sacrificing for it, letting it regulate one's life, and so on. Not believing in the picture means that the picture plays no part in one's thinking.[42]

So the believer and non-believer do not contradict each other because the non-believer simply has no use for that which regulates the believer's life.

A further difference between religious belief's and hypotheses is that, to quote Wittgenstein, "the whole weight may be in the picture".[43] Phillips expands this as follows:

> The picture is not a picturesque way of saying something else. It says what it says, and when the picture dies, some-

> thing dies with it and there can be no substitute for that which dies with the picture.[44]

It is not, says Phillips, as if we could complain that one picture is not doing the job and get another, new one. There is no notion of divinity independent of the picture. One gets it wrong if one speaks of a "use" of the picture to communicate the divine, if "use" implies a means to an otherwise specifiable end. But there are a good many metaphorical descriptions of God found in the Bible and our concept of God is, in some sense, made up of these. So Phillips cannot mean <u>this</u> sort of thing by "picture". But what <u>does</u> he mean, and does Wittgenstein mean the same thing? Unfortunately, Phillips offers little by way of clarification and this leaves one guessing. Alan Keightley thinks that Phillips' use of "picture" cashes out as "the logical space of beliefs".[45] If so, this usage is somewhat similar to Wittgenstein's; but one cannot do too much with it since this still leaves things radically underspecified. A lot more needs to be said about the notion of "logical space" before it is clear. In the next section I will discuss Ian Ramsey's notion of "models" which seems to me to get us farther than Phillips' use of the term "picture". I prefer to speak directly of the grammar or logic of a certain claim, and I will try to clarify what I mean by this as we proceed.

Phillips has been criticized for overdrawing the difference between various kinds of speech and for sacrificing what religion has to say about the whole of life.[46] He has tried to answer these criticisms, allowing that "to call religious belief a language-game can be misleading if it does suggest an isolated activity".[47] But he thinks that it need not do this; neither does he think that it follows from an admission that the meaning of religious beliefs depends upon certain facts that those beliefs are inferred from those facts. (Think here of what Winch says about his tribe looking toward the mountains.) Rather, there is a non-contingent, but also non-necessary, connection between various religious beliefs and certain facts of human life which are intelligible in non-religious terms--facts such as birth, death, copulation, conception, joy, misery, hope and despair. The relation is non-contingent in

that if these general facts of human life were different the beliefs would also be different: it is non-necessary in that these facts do not entail the beliefs.

> So far from it being true that religious beliefs can be thought of as isolated language-games, cut off from all other forms of life, the fact is that religious beliefs cannot be understood at all unless their relation to other forms of life is taken into account.[48]

In fact, the philosophical goal is "...that of trying to reveal the grammar of religious beliefs in relation to the human phenomena out of which they grow".[49] Exactly what this means needs to be clarified. Before attempting that, however, I would like to turn to the views of Ian Ramsey. Ramsey sees a connection between such phenomena and religious belief quite different from that which Phillips sees. The contrast between Ramsey's neo-empiricism and what has been said so far regarding Phillips will, I hope, prove instructive.

(iii) I.T. Ramsey

The questions which the late Ian Ramsey saw as central to any philosophical account of religious language are the following: "To what kind of situation does religion appeal?" and "What kind of empirical anchorage have theological words?". The phrase "empirical anchorage" would lead us to suspect that Ramsey is after what Phillips denies can, or ought to, be had: an external justification for religion. As we shall see, however, Ramsey's greatest weakness is precisely that he fails to make clear what an "empirical anchorage" amounts to.

Ramsey's quite general characterization of religion (and he too has Christianity foremost in mind) is as follows. It is founded on a distinctive kind of awareness which gives rise to a commitment that goes beyond rational considerations. Ramsey was much impressed by what he called "characteristically personal situations" which cannot be "contained in an 'impersonal' object language", and by how such situations differ from ones which can be so "contained".[50] Such situations, he thought, have to do with what the existentialists call "authenticity". For Ramsey religious commitment is very like a personal commitment or devotion to a husband, wife, lover, child, or friend. However, while

it retains all the depth such personal loyalties have, it has a much greater breadth: "it is a commitment suited to the whole job of living".[51] Such a commitment arises out of a particular kind of discernment, a discernment "...in relation to which argument has only a very odd function; its purpose being to tell such a tale as evokes the 'insight' the 'discernment' from which the commitment follows as a response".[52]

Ramsey coined a special phrase to name these "discernment" situations, namely "disclosure". Disclosures are "perceptual with a difference, perceptual and more"[53] and hence the language which is used to speak of and evoke them will be logically odd, "...i.e. object language which has been given very special qualifications, object language which exhibits logical peculiarities, logical impropriety".[54] Ramsey employs two main explicative notions to get at this oddness, those being "model" and "qualifier".

One of Ramsey's greatest strengths is that he emphasizes the great range and diversity of Biblical utterances about God, and this is a welcome change from most philosophers who focus narrowly on one or two claims. "The Lord" is spoken of in terms of family relations, work situations and trades, and in national and international political contexts. All of these provide what Ramsey calls "models" for religious discourse: hence, God is spoken of as father, mother, wife, friend, shepherd, builder, potter, dairymaid, judge, Lord, etc. Several questions arise immediately in the face of such diversity: How do such models come to be used? How do we choose among them? What grounds can one have for preferring one to another? Or can anything at all be said of God? Ramsey's general answer is that these models arise from the "discernment situations" or "disclosures" mentioned earlier. Such situations are not exhausted by the observables around which they arise.

> 'Husband', 'mother', 'father', 'friend',--these are words which while they are undoubtedly associated with certain characteristic behaviour patterns have a transcendent reference as well--and are grounded in disclosures.[55]

Such human cases may be, says Ramsey, a catalyst for the cosmic case, as when, for instance, the pattern of the seasons, of seed-time and harvest,

resembles the reliability of a friend. This "matching" of friend and nature may lead to a "cosmic disclosure".[56]

> It is as and when a cosmic disclosure is thereby evoked that we are able to speak of God--what the cosmic disclosure discloses--in terms of the models with which the finite situations have supplied us.[57]

Phillips, as we saw, denies that there is any notion of divinity apart from certain "pictures", whereas Ramsey sees such "models" as amplifying, or perhaps making up, our concept of God. Here Ramsey, despite some unanswered questions, is clearer than Phillips, for we have a good idea what a "model" is, but not a "picture" as Phillips uses the term. We still need to explore what Ramsey calls the "problem of preferences", the question of how one model is chosen over another, but before an answer can be given to that question we must examine Ramsey's notion of "qualifiers".

"Qualifiers" are words which work with models to evoke disclosures. The attributes of negative theology are qualifiers. Take "immutability": it leads us, says Ramsey, to focus on change and interaction and then, as it were, "...whispers in our ears a contrasting denial: Change? Yes, but there's something which does not change, which is 'immutable'...."[58] Likewise, "impassible" invites us to "treat all passible stories as inadequate", as less than complete. What these words do in such contexts is get us to

> ...fix on mutable and passible features of perceptual situations and to develop these features in such a way that there is evoked a characteristically different situation which is the foundation <u>in fact</u> for assertions about God's immutability or impassibility.[59]

As such, they are "a kind of technique for meditation", though some disclosures seem to "just happen" without any developing of a model. That the believer does not control this process is recognized, says Ramsey, in the notion of revelation coming from God.

Spatial terms such as "beyond", "behind", and "within" are also frequently used as qualifiers when speaking of God's relation to the world, to events, and to people. They are not primarily descriptive, but function something like imperatives, leading us to see the flux of

life in a certain way.

> There need be nothing antecedently strange in the fact that a word which has some descriptive force should nevertheless do its most important work as an imperative. 'Exit' is such a word: and its logic may help to make that of qualifiers more credible.[60]

Qualifiers, then, say little: they "...are the words which save not the appearances but the transcendence".[61] They are what Ramsey calls "virtually uninformative", what Ayer called "informationally vacuous". "When it is a matter of saying a great deal...of being relevant, theology turns to its models."[62]

Our second major question, deferred a moment ago, was "Why some models rather than others?". A fully articulated answer to this question is difficult to find in Ramsey's work, but he does supply two general criteria by which a model may justify itself. The first has to do with its compatibility with other models, its breadth of application.

> A model like person is better, than, say shepherd or potter because it can say all that these other models can say and more besides; in this way it can absorb the discourse from two or more models.[63]

"Absorb", not "replace", for part of the force of "shepherd" as a model is specific to it, such as talk of "lambs straying", or even of "being fleeced". Since shepherds are also persons, and persons are always logically more than their function as shepherds, the latter term is more inclusive logically, and can integrate a wide variety of models and discourse about many situations. In this way it "absorbs" other models.

The second criterion for the relative adequacy of models is the degree to which they "fit" what else we know, the accuracy of the analogy, if you will. Thus for "love" to be a useful model:

> there must be a pattern of empirical circumstances which fit 'loving' discourse when used of God. Such a fit is pragmatic in the largest sense; but it is not given by experimental verification in a strict scientific sense.[64]

Ramsey gives no real answer as to why counter-examples to "loving" situations such as a child's dying of cancer do not make the model useless. It seems to me that his only available reply would be that they limit, rather than refute such a model. This would mean that qualifiers do

more than evoke disclosures, they also tell us, as it were, when to change channels; they show us that all models are limited and that they are not literal factual claims.

Such a view would seem to be consistent with what else Ramsey says, for he does believe that sooner or later all models will be inadequate, no matter what range of experience they encompass. This is because ultimately what doctrinal assertions do is, in Augustine's phrase, "fence a mystery". And the mystery is essential to Christianity: it is given, apparently, along with the "objective reference"--the "'something' which is other than ourselves"--in a cosmic disclosure. Ramsey reads the history of Christianity as the sponsorship of a wide variety of models, always relying on the ultimate mystery signalled by qualifiers to limit the dominance of any one model. Heretics, in fact, are often dominated by one model to the exclusion of others seen as central to the faith.

> The struggle to understand God can never come to a satisfactory end: the language-game can never be completed. Broadly speaking, what orthodoxy did was to support the winner of every heat.[65]

In the next section, when I compare in more detail certain aspects of Ramsey's and Phillips' accounts, there will be occasion to ask why it is that the language-game cannot be completed, and what the ramifications are of this.

So far Ramsey has not told us what it is that makes certain models inappropriate. Why don't Christians speak of God first driving mad those He would destroy, for instance? Saying that this doesn't square with discourse about love is not enough, but nothing more is forthcoming. Why has "Love" come to be such privileged model? There <u>is</u> extensive mention of the wrath of God in the Bible as well, so perhaps I should make the initial questiom more open: <u>can</u> Christians, while remaining orthodox, speak of God driving mad those He would destroy, and if not, why not? Is it because such discourse does not, in the broad sense, "fit" the facts of the world, or because it does not "fit" with other Christian discourse, or what? Ramsey seems to have no answer to this important question.

Earlier I quoted Ramsey's phrase that an "objective reference" is given in cosmic disclosures, and we need to inquire into this, too, for the word "objective" is used in many different ways by different people. While Ramsey allows that we cannot speak literally about God, he holds that in a disclosure one is confronted by that which is relatively active while one is passive: there is an experience of otherness akin to the experience of confronting another person.

> It is the objectivity of what declares itself to us--challenges us in a way that persons may do. It is in this sense that God declares his objectivity, and some would say that in a similar sense Duty also declares its objectivity.[66]

But this analogy is of no help. Duties are certainly objective in the sense that they are not a matter of individual whim or caprice, but talk of Duty does not imply something external to us (all humans) in the way in which the God of the Bible is external. Duty is not external in the sense that anything would be left of it were we humans to cease to exist. Phillips has warned, and rightly, against likening God to physical objects, and it does seem to be part of the logic of the Biblical view of God that He is not an object among others. But the believer holds that though Heaven and earth pass away the Lord will not, and <u>this</u> sort of objectivity is not possessed by Duty. Moreover, it is an avowedly poetic (though not thereby unwarranted) way of speaking to speak of "Duty". The individuation or personification of "duties" into "Duty" is relatively inessential, and nothing much of importance would be lost if we said "duties" only and ceased to speak of "Duty calling". But not so with "God", for believers do not speak of "God" and "gods" interchangeably, and the individuation is <u>very</u> important.

How is this individuation justified on Ramsey's schema? Phillips, of course, would reject the question, holding that justification, which consists in the supporting of a proposition of one kind by one of another kind, is out of place. This is what he means to deny when he denies that external justification of religion is to be sought. As we saw, Ayer held that external justification in the form of sensory experience was necessary to guarantee the meaningfulness of <u>any</u> utterance not analy-

tic. Is the oneness of God a thing which stands in need of justification according to Ramsey? Or when Ramsey uses the term "justification" is he using it in a weaker sense, one compatible with these remarks of Wittgenstein:

> To be sure there is justification, but justification comes to an end.
> To use a word without justification does not mean to use it without a right.[67]

It is not clear what Ramsey would have said to this. He clearly thought that some sort of reasons could be given as to why Christians speak of one God, and he thought these were related to why we speak of one world.

> Without some contextual setting, the word "God" plainly means nothing; on the other hand, if the word "God" had a completely adequate contextual setting it would be the name whose reference was the whole universe, and it is this, I believe, which justifies us meanwhile in claiming that the reference of any and every cosmic disclosure, ie. a disclosure which is restricted to no finite pattern of spatio-temporal events as its center, is the same, viz. God.[68]

In as much as Ramsey fancied himself an empiricist he may really be seeking external justification for talk of one God--and his remarks about "finite patterns" of "spatio-temporal events" seem to presuppose a view of meaning not too different from Ayer's. But if so, this argument clearly fails to justify the use of "God" in addition to "universe". It also makes it look as if "God" were a proper name, something Ramsey elsewhere denies; he says the choice of proper name or definite description need not be made at all. And this, he claims, is only to say "... that the logical status of 'God' is unique".[69] How far this gets us is not clear, and I want to discuss this issue and others in the next section.

(iv) Further discussion of Ramsey and Phillips

In this section I want to explore the positions of both Phillips and Ramsey a little deeper with an eye out to fundamental differences in how they conceive epistemology and philosophy in general.

In the paper "Religion and Epistemology: Some Contemporary Confusions",[70] Phillips has criticized Ramsey's account for needlessly introducing sceptical considerations into an account of religious discourse.

"(Ramsey) equates the concept of reality found in religion with the general question about the nature of reality in which metaphysicians and epistemologists are interested."[71] What philosophy is after at this level, says Phillips, is an account of what makes any discourse or knowledge possible at all. Ramsey says that there is "a mystery which confronts...all (disciplines)",[72] but Phillips finds this absurd. There is, he says, a specifically religious concept of mystery; this has nothing to do with "mysterious epistemologies" à la Ramsey, but can be elucidated "...by clarifying the grammar of the discourse in question".[73]

> Ignorance is of the essence in detective mysteries. But religious mysteries have no relation to ignorance. They do not refer to that which may be, but as a matter of fact is not, known, but to that which is logically unknowable. To understand what is meant by religious mystery is to understand how to use the concept of mystery--for example, in worship and meditation. Religious mystery is connected with what the saints have called 'the way of unknowing', with the folly of thinking that there are reasons for why things are as they are....[74]

So the criteria for religious mystery are not themselves mysterious, and they are only applicable to religious contexts, not more widely.

A good deal more needs to be said about this argument. Ramsey, of course, means "mystery" to apply to more than religious contexts. In one sense, on his view, God is "logically unknowable" in that no human being could ever achieve anything like exhaustive knowledge of God. Phillips would hold that this is because it makes no sense to speak of exhaustive knowledge of God, and that seeing this is to understand something of the grammar of religious discourse. Ramsey did not work in a philosophical tradition which spoke of "grammar", so it is not clear what he would say to this. (We must say a good deal more about this notion, and I devote most of Chapter Two to a discussion of it.) One thing I think he would say is that even if one's ignorance of God is necessary in some sense, and hence different from some sorts of scientific ignorance, for instance, it does not follow from this, as Phillips claims, that religious mysteries have no relation to ignorance. When St. Paul speaks of "seeing face to face"[75] he has something in mind which is related to coming to know more, to changing states of affairs. Even here

it is not simply a matter of more information, however.

Phillips' reasons for holding that there is a special religious concept of mystery are important, though not obviously consistent. He believes that "...any distinction between sameness and difference will be a distinction found in a particular mode of discourse".[76] This, of course, calls into question Ramsey's talk of the "same mystery" confronting all disciplines. Phillips' saying that "any distinction between sameness and difference will be a distinction found in a particular mode of discourse" seems to imply that there are different modes of discourse wherein there are criteria for difference and sameness. But to say this seems to employ the very general notions of sameness and difference which he is denying are available. The contradiction seems to arise because Phillips is somewhat careless when it comes to the philosophy of language. It is certainly true that sameness and difference are context-dependent in some sense, that the criteria for somethings being "the same x" will vary with "x". But it does not follow from this that these notions are simply relative to the given discourses. One can just as well see them as the common property of all discourses to be put to use in a variety of ways, in the service of different objectives.[77]

This account of sameness and difference reflects certain differences between Phillips and Ramsey regarding metaphysics as well. Ramsey speaks of metaphysics providing "...a context which in its totality is offered as the simplest, most consistent, most comprehensive, and most coherent map of the universe".[78] Exactly how such a map works, and why there is a need for a map of the universe is never spelled out. But whatever else it does, such a map is a way of integrating all our various modes of speech, of providing a sort of unity. Phillips, of course, disapproves of the notion that there is any one "best map of the universe" on the grounds that such a "map" requires some account of phenomena which is neutral to any particular realm of discourse or language-game.

> But what are these phenomena? Religious language is not an interpretation of how things are, but determines how things are for the believer. The saint and the atheist do not interpret the same world in different ways. They see different worlds.[79]

This is because, as Winch puts it, "our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use".[80] While Phillips' use of this idea seems uncomfortably idealistic, I want to draw attention to the implications for metaphysics. Phillips is no less persuaded than Ayer that metaphysics of Ramsey's sort is illicit, though he is persuaded on somewhat different grounds. He thinks that metaphysics is an attempt to say what cannot properly be said, an attempt to put into propositional form the structure or "grammar" of the discourse. This leads to absurdity as arbitrary rules for the use of language become debated as if they were substantive claims. Phillips thinks that religious utterances, unlike metaphysics, are simply expressions of the force of language.[81] Rather than transgressing limits religious talk is an expression of limits, as when talk of God's governance places limits on what can be said about sorrow and loss--and on talk of God's "psychology". In the case of metaphysics one exposes the confusions which led to it; in the religious case "what we need to do in order to bring out their force is simply to bring to bear on them other features of the lives of people who hold these...beliefs".[82]

Phillips nonetheless wants to hold that religious beliefs are properly so-called, that they are not simply, as Ayer would sometimes have it, expressions of feeling or intent. It is just that "belief" amounts to something quite different in religious contexts from what it does in others. "In the religious case the beliefs in question are implicit in the practices rather than opinions or theories on which the practices are founded."[83] "Belief in God" is different from other sorts of "belief in" because it involves "...some affective state or attitude having God as its object, and those attitudes could vary from reverential love to rebellious rejection".[84] Phillips even says that the truth of religious beliefs consists in the degree to which people are able to live by them. This claim, however, stands in need of more spelling out than Phillips has given it to date: it seems right that religious beliefs are often given a "pragmatic" justification by believers ("taste and see"), but how does truth "consist in" the ability to live by certain

lights, and how does one assess such ability, by what other criteria of success, failure, or reasonability?

Phillips is confident that he is following Wittgenstein in rejecting metaphysics,[85] but one of the lessons which I draw from the later work of Wittgenstein is that such generality is dangerous. For both Phillips and Ayer "metaphysics" is not spelled out; it seems they both have in mind a certain way of understanding philosophical claims which is factual and literal-minded, but the suggestion that most philosophers of the past engaged in solely--or mainly--this seems insupportable. Whatever else he was doing Wittgenstein was, in comparing the treatment of a philosophical problem to the treatment of an illness, pointing to the need for detailed and particular attention to given cases. I will not enter any general debate about "metaphysics" but, rather, will confine myself to discussing certain other issues. We need to ask whether Ramsey's quest for a "best map" of the universe is misguided, as Phillips claims, and, if it is, to see if Phillips' solution of the saint and atheist seeing "different worlds" is the right one. (In Chapter Three I will argue for a view which sees a need for many "maps" of the world and which sees "language" as the "atlas" which holds all these many different sorts of maps. But this is to jump ahead.)

Ramsey has called metaphysics "...pre-eminently a venture after unity: an endeavour to provide a scheme of maximum interpretive power".[86] Such a scheme or map is, like all special disciplines, ancillary to ordinary language. Its main distinctive function is that of integrating other schemes (here used as meaning much the same thing as "language-game"). To do this it must use "...integrator words not native to any of the diverse observational languages of the sciences, yet able to combine with and supplement them...."[87] To simply use scientific/observational terms would be to replace rather than integrate diversity, and this is something science tends toward, the simplification and ordering of our speech into only scientific terms. Metaphysical integrators "...must have their grounding in what is more than spatio-temporal, ie. they must be 'meta-physical' in a more obviously traditional sense".[88]

Theism, even when primitive or naive, is such a scheme, and it is the word "God" which Ramsey believes to be "...the integrator word which provides the most simple, far-reaching and coherent metaphysical map".[89] But we need to go further in asking after the differences between metaphysics and religion, for Ramsey well-nigh identifies the two while Phillips sees them as quite distinct.

Nowhere does Ramsey discuss competing "integrator words"; that is a shame, for it makes it less than clear why "God" is the best one, and it also leaves one somewhat in the dark as to how these words work. Phrases such as "interpretive power" and "explanation" also stand in need of some further explication. "Interpretive power" seems related to universality, what was called "breadth" with regard to models. It seems that Ramsey would find it a virtue that one could say something about any and every occurrence from within one's metaphysical scheme. Phillips, as we have seen, thinks such a desire is misplaced and misguided. "Explanation" is always difficult to make plain, but it is at least questionable that Ramsey means it in the narrow sense of the opposite of prediction. Broadly, there seem to be two ways in which theistic (or more widely, "religious") integrators can "explain" and "integrate" other modes of discourse. First, they can do this as a sort of meta-theory, explaining the other ways of talking in detail. But this is too much like what the philosophy of language does; we don't find this sort of thing in the Bible. Second, theism can provide a way of talking, a mode of discourse, a language-game, that can absorb or integrate other kinds within it while remaining logically different, and so provide a language which is applicable to any situation. It seems that Ramsey is after something close to this, but his epistemology, as I will show in a moment, prevents him from realizing the impact of his insight. The issue of whether such "integration" amounts to explanation is closely related to the deepest differences between Ramsey and Phillips. On the face of it Phillips' demand that a non-superstitious religion be a logically distinct and independent mode of discourse seems to rule out such a possibility, whereas Ramsey's identification of religion with

metaphysics seems to invite an equation of integration and explanation. The main issue to be addressed in Chapters Two and Three is in what sense religious discourse is a distinct language-game and what this implies for its relation to the other discourses. Something more, however, can be said here as regards Phillips' and Ramsey's views on this matter.

In the series of lectures published under the title Models and Mystery Ramsey argues that the natural and social sciences employ models in much the same way that religion and theology do. Following Max Black[90] he distinguishes between two kinds of models: (1) scale or "picturing" models, which attempt to reproduce identically features of the original;[91] and (2) "analogue" or "disclosure" models, which rather depend on some sort of "...structural similarity, some sort of isomorphism, between the model and the phenomena in respect of which it is used...."[92] The religious models discussed earlier are of the second kind, and likewise those of natural science. Though the nineteenth century was largely convinced that science consisted of picturing models, Ramsey thinks that most scientists today would concur that "light wave" and "photon" are rather disclosure models. The example is pertinent in that these two ways of speaking seem to co-exist quite happily, and are alternately used depending upon which aspects of the behaviour of light want emphasis. There seems to be no pressing need for a theory which integrates "wave" and "particle" talk. (To press the map analogy, both are useful maps and one merely needs to know which one to consult.)

Ramsey never speaks of models as a species of metaphor, preferring instead to list resemblances between the two phenomena. These are: that both "provide us with abundant possibilities of articulation" by enabling a "transaction between contexts", and that both are rooted in disclosures. They are born in, "...and thereafter intended to evoke, a disclosure associated with a tangential meeting of two diverse contexts ...."[93] Ramsey may not want models too closely associated with metaphor because many philosophers allow only a limited role for metaphors. Ramsey certainly thinks, for instance, that models are very much "about how things are", and in something very like a referring way.

Is Ramsey right that models in science are used to evoke disclo-

sures? And, if so, when? One could not say, "every time they are used", for linguistic expressions are not tied to particular experiences in that sort of way. But when then? It seems that Ramsey fails to distinguish two sorts of cases; when a model is first used some sort of unusual experience of "seeing" the point is very common, perhaps even necessary. But it need not be repeated time after time. Rather, one becomes used to thinking in certain terms and what was once odd or strange becomes second nature. No disclosure is here required, though very similar situations are <u>sometimes</u> needed to pierce the crust of convention, to recover the original insight. These too may well be called disclosures, but the point I wish to make is that Ramsey's requirement that a model always evokes a disclosure, or even that it always <u>should</u>, seems to me unnecessary and misguided, a hangover from an empiricism which sought external justification in direct experience.

Ramsey says that some sort of ontological commitment is entailed in the use of a disclosure model.

> The ontological commitment arises in a disclosure, and the model, whether in science or theology, provides us with its own understanding of, and its own inroad into, what the disclosure discloses....[94]

> (O)jective reference is safeguarded, for the object declares its objectivity by actively confronting us.[95]

> But no description is guaranteed.[96]

One wonders just what the "inroad" really amounts to if no description is guaranteed--certainly <u>not</u> a guarantee of truth. The answer seems to be that the immediate experience of the disclosure gives us "something other than ourselves", an objective reference, without inference.[97] It is here, however, that Phillips' criticisms of Ramsey are most to the point. If the description is not guaranteed, he argues, then there are procedures for testing it (though these need not be very developed or formal). Just as the spirits must be tested to see whether they be of God, so too disclosures must be tested to see whether they be of science.[98] Ramsey says that he does not want to suggest that "...the way in which a scientific object eludes our grasp is precisely that in which a theological object does",[99] yet he offers nothing beyond our intuitions for

telling them apart. Phillips' point is that it is doubtful that we could ever tell them apart merely on the basis of perceiver and object. Rather, one needs recourse to the criteria embedded in the language, for the notion of "something other than ourselves" is also part of the language, as are the notions of "object" and "reality".

> (Ramsey's) agent is simply confronted by phenomena, which disclose themselves in various ways. But, as Winch points out, although "the phenomena being investigated present themselves to the scientist as an object of study", and he observes them and notices certain facts about them, "to say of a man that he does this presupposes that he has a mode of communication in the use of which rules are already being observed", and this brings one back to the relation between the scientist and his fellow scientists.[100]

So social and linguistic criteria need to be taken into account in drawing any distinction between science and religion. To do this is, in part, to reveal the "grammar" of our language. Moreover, "once a specific context is introduced, the disclosure, the insight, call it what you will, cannot play the fundamental role which Ramsey attributes to it".[101] But this is misleading on Phillips' part, since it is not perfectly clear what role Ramsey does attribute to disclosures. What is clear is that they alone cannot be the basis of an epistemology, and Ramsey never explicitly recognizes this. In failing to say anything about the role which social relations play in our language Ramsey is unable to really account for the differences between religious and scientific criteria of assessment--worse, he is not able to account for there being such differences at all. He is, of course, aware that such differences exist--indeed, he often sensitively observes them--but he cannot philosophically say much about them, and the implication that disclosures will do the trick is misleading. Disclosures, whatever else they are, cannot play the role of an independent justification of religious belief.

One can only recommend "God" as an integrator word given some concept of God, and this will always involve one in a tradition, for there are important differences between Zeus and Yaweh and Allah. Neither Ramsey nor Phillips has said much that helps us learn how it is that

the believer's choice of models is not unlimited, especially once we allow that the "existence" of God is not an empirical issue. As was mentioned earlier, modelling God on a spoiled brat or as he who first drives mad those he would destroy does not seem readily possible for a Christian. If a direct insight cannot explain this, neither can simply asserting the priority of language over "experience", for as we saw, Phillips' use of "picture" makes religious belief, and changes therein, look less than rational. One can, I think, answer "That's just what we (or they) do" too early. In the next chapter I want to discuss Stuart Brown's explication of the Wittgensteinian notion of "grammar", as I think it, or some notion like it, is a way of dealing with such conceptual and linguistic change which can avoid the excesses and defects of both Phillips and Ramsey.

I have been unable to pin down the sense in which Ramsey thinks that religious beliefs can be "justified". At times he seems to imply that disclosures provide something like an independent ground for religious belief, but he has also discussed at length, and quite helpfully, the way in which models make possible, in some sense, such disclosures. I will not pursue this question further with regard to Ramsey's beliefs, but it will recur in a different guise in Chapter Three when I discuss in what sense religious discourse is a distinct language-game from other modes of discourse. Since D.Z. Phillips has very much emphasized this view of distinct--perhaps even separate--language-games, I will further consider his views later, in Chapter Four.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. Alfred Jules Ayer, ed., Logical Positivism, Free Press, New York, 1958, p.iv.

2. _____, Language, Truth and Logic (hereafter LTL), London 1936, Dover, New York, 1952.

3. _____, LTL, p.13.

4. _____, LTL, p.13.

5. Kierkegaard, for instance, says "God does not think, He creates; God does not exist, He is eternal". (Concluding Unscientific Postscript, excerpted in A Kierkegaard Anthology, R. Bretall ed., Princeton University Press, 1946, p.231.) This is what I will call in Chapter Two a "grammatical remark", and it more accurately reflects the Christian concept of God than does Ayer's simple statement.

6. A.J. Ayer, LTL, p.113.

7. _____, LTL, p.115.

8. C.G. Hempel, "The Empiricist Criteria of Cognitive Significance: Problems and Changes", anthologized in many places including Richard E. Grandy, ed., Theories and Observations in Science Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971.

9. F. Waismann, "Language Strata", in I.T. Ramsey, ed., Words About God (hereafter WAG), Harper, New York, 1971, p.127.

10. Alice Ambrose, "Linguistic Approaches to Philosophical Problems", in Richard Rorty, ed., The Linguistic Turn, University of Chicago, 1967, p.155.

11. At least one early positivist--Otto Neurath--did not share this assumption, but in the main I think the statement is true.

12. D.Z. Phillips, Faith and Philosophical Enquiry (hereafter FPE), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970, p.17.

13. The relation between Phillips' views and those of Wittgenstein is a complex matter. I will not try to sort them out in any detail, but I will have something to say on certain particular issues, especially in Chapter Four.

14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Pears and McGuiness trans., London 1961, see esp. 3.143.

15. _____, Zettel, Blackwell's, Oxford, 1967, #322.

16. _____, Philosophical Investigations (hereafter PI), Blackwell's, Oxford 1958 ed. The section from number 1 to number 38 constitutes an argument against such "simple ostension". See also number 497.

17. _____, PI, p.18e.

18. _____, PI, 1,199.

19. _____, PI, 1,241.

20. Wittgenstein holds it to be a requirement of anything we would call a "natural language" that there be agreement in judging ("This is the same as that"), in responses ("natural" responses such as laughter, aversion, etc.), and in practices. The specific nature of the agreement is a matter of "the natural history of human beings" and hence we end up with different cultures and practices. His strange examples of people quite different from us--in basic responses as well as practices--are meant to show us that while we could have agreed in different ways, in fundamental matters we do not really have any idea what it would be to agree differently, and people quite different from us become increasingly incomprehensible to us. The categories of "necessary" and "contingent" are too crude to tell us much about, as it were, the relation between form and content here. For a good discussion of this point I recommend Barry Stroud's "Wittgenstein and Logical Necessity" in Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations, ed. George Pitcher, New York, 1966.

21. L. Wittgenstein, Zettel, op.cit., #308.

22. Peter Winch, "Meaning and Religious Language" in S.C. Brown ed., Reason and Religion (hereafter R&R), London 1977, p.195.

23. _____, in R&R, p.196.

24. Stuart C. Brown, "Religion and the Limits of Language" in R&R, p.247.

25. Peter Winch, in R&R, p.199.

26. _____, in R&R, p.202.

27. _____, in R&R, p.207.

28. In Chapter Three, section II, and more briefly in Chapter Four.

29. L. Wittgenstein, PI, 1,664.

30. I will use the words "grammar" and "logic" more or less interchangeably. Every major change in grammar is, as I try to show in Chapter Two, a change in what follows from a given claim and, hence, a change in logic. A "grammatical claim" is a kind of statement which is contrasted in Chapter Two with both an analytic claim and a factual one.

31. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.2.

32. _____, FPE, p.3.

33. _____, FPE, p.4.

34. _____, FPE, p.81.

35. _____, FPE, p.103.

36. _____, FPE, p.105.

37. _____, FPE, p.127.

38. _____, FPE, p.131.

39. If one identifies "finding out" with "knowledge" then, of course, religious statements do not amount to knowledge. I will side with Stuart Brown on this issue in Chapter Two: he argues for a sense of "knowledge" which has to do with "understanding" rather than "finding out", though I do not (nor does he) claim that a sharp boundary can be drawn here.

40. L. Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief, Cyril Barrett ed., University of California Press, 1968. I believe that these notes are too sketchy to be of great value, and that they are too early to reflect the full maturity of Wittgenstein's views. I also think, though I will not argue for this, that Phillips is too much influenced by these rather vague remarks, and that he has failed to fully apply Wittgenstein's deepest insights to religious questions. (See Chapter Four.)

41. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.89. See also Alan Keightley's Wittgenstein, Grammar and God, Epworth, London 1976 (hereafter WGG), for a discussion of what Phillips means by "picture". Keightley concludes (pp.72-80) that a "picture" is the "logical space of belief". I am not now able to sort out the various meanings of "picture" in Wittgenstein's thought, and I do not know if Phillips follows any one of these. I do think that we can more clearly discuss religious language in speaking of "grammar",

and I will do so in Chapter Two.

42. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.90.

43. L. Wittgenstein, Lectures..., op.cit., p.72.

44. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.119.

45. Alan Keightley, WGG, pp.72-80.

46. R.W. Hepburn in "From World to God", Mind lxxii (1963); John Hick in "Sceptics and Believers", Faith and the Philosophers, Macmillan 1964; and Kai Nielsen in "Wittgenstein Fideism", Philosophy, 1967.

47. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.120.

48. _____, FPE, p.97.

49. _____, The Concept of Prayer (hereafter CofP), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p.83.

50. I.T. Ramsey, Religious Language: an Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases, SCM, London, 1957, p.20 (hereafter RL).

51. _____, RL, p.36.

52. _____, RL, p.37.

53. _____, RL, p.37.

54. _____, RL, p.38.

55. _____, WAG, p.206.

56. In Christian Empiricism (hereafter CE), London, 1974, p.162, Ramsey says the following about disclosures in general:
"I use 'disclosure' not in relation to information, but to refer to situations about which various metaphorical phrases are commonly used. Such phrases...are those which speak of situations 'coming alive', 'taking on depth', situations in which 'the penny drops'....Such situations may be of a dramatic and spectacular kind...or they may be of the kind where we gradually come to 'see'....They occur...when we see the 'point' of a puzzle drawing, or when we see that a particular sequence eg. 1/2, 2/3, 3/4, 4/5, 5/6, 6/7, has an upper bound on one. It is with such situations in mind that I speak of disclosures."
Later, in section iv of Chapter One, we will have occasion to wonder how far this gets us, to wonder whether these experiences of coming to understand can be identified with understanding.

See Wittgenstein's various remarks on memory in PI.

57. I.T. Ramsey, WAG, p.206.

58. _____, RL, p.50.

59. _____, RL, p.53.

60. _____, Christian Discourse: Some Logical Explorations, Oxford University Press, London, 1965, p.79 (hereafter CD).

61. _____, CD, p.79.

62. _____, CD, p.80.

63. _____, WAG, p.214.

64. _____, WAG, p.215.

65. _____, RL, p.170.

66. _____, CD, p.88.

67. L. Wittgenstein, PI, 1, 289.

68. I.T. Ramsey, CD, p.82.

69. _____, CD, p.83. Phillips, as we shall see, denies that "God" is a name. He would, I think, agree that the word "God" has a logically unique behaviour if that is not taken to mean that its logic cannot be elucidated or spelled out. In Chapter Three I will try to say what I take "logical uniqueness" to amount to.

70. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.123.

71. _____, FPE, p.133.

72. I.T. Ramsey, Models and Mystery (hereafter M&M), Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1964, p.1.

73. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.133.

74. _____, FPE, p.142.

75. I Corinthians 15:12-19.

76. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.134.

77. I will discuss, and recommend, this way of putting things in Chapter Three.

78. I.T. Ramsey, CD, p.82.

79. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.132.

80. Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1958, p.15.

81. D.Z. Phillips, Religion Without Explanation (hereafter RWE), Blackwell's, Oxford, 1976, p.111.

82. _____, RWE, p.106.

83. S.C. Brown, op.cit., in R&R, p.254.

84. Norman Malcolm quoted in FPE, p.31.

85. In general discussion of "metaphysics" it is often less than clear what is meant by this term. Wittgenstein's attitude towards "metaphysics" is not easy to decipher. He spoke of himself as engaged in "an activity that is one of the heirs of the subject that used to be called Philosophy". Renford Bambrough has said that "metaphysics or pure philosophy is the study of the nature of knowledge, of the nature and inter-relations of the ultimate modes of justification of propositions of all types...." ("Principia Metaphysics", Philosophy, April 1964.) On this definition Wittgenstein was surely a metaphysician and Phillips offers only one argument for supposing that such a study is impossible (the bad argument for ambiguity). When they say "metaphysics" both Phillips and Ayer seem to have in mind a relatively un-self-critical pastime in which illicit a priori reasoning leads to claims about how the world is, what Michael Hinton has called "glossogenic" philosophy. But such a practice is far from all that traditional philosophers did, and I see no good reason to, as it were, throw the real metaphysics out with the bath water.

86. I.T. Ramsey, "On the Possibility and Purpose of a Metaphysical Theology", in Ramsey ed., Prospects for Metaphysics, London, 1961, p.160 (hereafter PforM). Ramsey's view of metaphysics seems to be one that proposes certain specific arguments for a given "system". As such, it is closer to what Phillips and Ayer attack than it is to Bambrough's purely descriptive sort of metaphysics. Though this is a topic of sufficient breadth and depth to warrant a thesis or two of its own, it does seem to me that the difference between description and proving is crucial, and that a "deductive" metaphysics of the old kind is an error.

87. _____, PforM, p.163.

88. I.T. Ramsey, PforM, p.163.

89. _____, PforM, p.164.

90. Max Black, Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1962.

91. Needless to say, this is not Phillips' sense of "picture".

92. I.T. Ramsey, M&M, p.12.

93. _____, M&M, pp.49-52.

94. _____, M&M, p.20.

95. _____, M&M, p.58.

96. _____, PforM, p.176.

97. _____, CE, p.163.

98. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.137.

99. I.T. Ramsey, M&M, p.15.

100. D.Z. Phillips, FPE, p.136.

101. _____, FPE, p.135.

CHAPTER TWO

GRAMMAR AND GRAMMATICAL CLAIMS

> When we make the question of reality the central one we miss the point that what we are to believe is not the miracle but the word of God. The miracle has nothing of its own to give. What is really true is the word of God. --Jacques Ellul

(i) Stuart Brown on "grammatical claims"

In this section I want to examine Stuart C. Brown's development of the notion of "grammar", a notion used but never explicated very fully by D.Z. Phillips. The notion comes from the later work of Wittgenstein: "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)"[1] Both Brown and Phillips operate within the broad Wittgensteinian tradition and use the same vocabulary. At times this makes it seem as though their views are almost identical; witness this from Brown: "...the standards which govern what it makes sense to say within a given field of discourse must be sought <u>within</u> that field of discourse itself".[2] But while their views are superficially similar, and in some ways they are closer to one another than either is to either Ramsey or Ayer, the ways in which they differ over the concept of grammar leads to further profound differences which are more important than initial, superficial similarities.

Brown makes two preliminary distinctions which influence his later account of grammar. The first is between the exercise and application of a concept. A person may come to have a formal grasp of the rules governing the use of a concept but still not find it intelligible, not be able to apply it to any cases. He can be said to know how to exercise but not apply that concept. "One needs...some capacity to <u>exercise</u> a concept in order to recognize that a given application (can or) cannot

be made".[3] This is consistent with the insight that the criterion for understanding a concept is how it is applied; the understanding needed for mere exercise without application would not normally be called "understanding", i.e. it is a long way from mastery of a concept. Some concepts, of course, are incoherent and cannot be "mastered". If this distinction can be maintained then it does not follow, as Phillips sometimes seems to think, from the fact that religious language is rule-governed that it is intelligible.

Brown's second distinction comes from Wittgenstein, but has been made by many others, including Carnap. There is, he says, a difference between questions that arise within a given linguistic framework and questions about that system or framework as a whole. The universal sceptic, for instance, doubts the truth or adequacy of our whole framework of knowledge: this is an external question with quite different implications from questions such as "What is the speed of light?" or "Who was the first President of Chile?". These are questions which are internal to physics and history.

The asking of external questions is an odd and risky business, and Brown treats at some length the example of Descartes' worry about universal deception. In asking whether we might not be universally deceived in our observations and judgements, wrong <u>all</u> the time, Descartes makes use of the distinction between veridical and non-veridical observations and judgements. But where does such a distinction come from, and what is involved in using it? The answer seems to be from observation-talk: we all are familiar with the difference in, say, a court case. But if this is right, why should we (and Descartes) suppose that an internal distinction from the practice of observations could be applied to the whole practice itself? No basis is offered on which we could apply these internal standards to the language-game as a whole; so we are left not knowing what it would be to be wrong or deceived <u>all</u> the time. Descartes broke a rule of grammar with respect to observation language: in doubting the perspective implied in observation-talk he presupposed it. "Presupposing a conception of reality" and "breaking a rule of grammar" amount to the <u>same</u> criticism here.

This example may serve to demonstrate the dangers and complexities involved in asking external questions, but it does not show that all such questions are confused, let alone that metaphysics consists of such questions. Phillips may hold such a view, but if so Brown does not share it. It seems to me that this "internal-external" distinction gets us farther than general talk of "metaphysics" precisely because it makes us focus on cases.

Brown and Phillips would agree that the notion of "correspondence with reality" cannot be used to give content to language "...for its content needs to be specified by reference to the field of discourse into which it enters".[4] All talk of "reality" takes place within some conception of reality and "...grammatical propositions, in stating what it would not make sense to deny, articulate features of a conception of reality".[5] From within such a conception they appear as in some way necessarily true (and this sheds light on a lot of metaphysics!). It is noteworthy that grammatical claims often appear less as explicit avowals than as what someone is committed to by virtue of other claims.[6] Remember, Ayer's example of a religious utterance was "God exists", and that does not appear very often in religious literature.

Certain philosophers speak of "conceptual truths" or claims. Sometimes they mean something quite close to what Wittgenstein meant by "grammatical remarks", but at others they mean something more like "analytic truths". Grammatical claims stand in contrast to matter-of-fact claims but not in quite the way analytic ones do. The distinctions are similar but they do not mark off the same ground and it is important not to confuse them. I will try to bring out the difference in what follows.

Grammatical claims stand in contrast to matter-of-fact claims. They are conventional in the sense that "...the standards of correctness and incorrectness are reflected in the established use which words have in the language".[7] Brown calls this "weak conventionalism" in opposition to the conventionalism of someone like Ayer (or Quine). Ayer seems to think that the correct usage of a word is subject to stipulation, that we can decide what we mean, and that all changes in meaning could be conventional in this sense. This is "strong conventionalism". But in

practice it is not only strong conventionalists who operate in the following way: when a new grammar is put forward the claim is made that it is self-contradictory. Brown treats Galileo's claims about the moon as an example. Galileo claimed, on the basis of observation, that the moon was not perfectly spherical. He was attacked on the grounds that it was part of the concept of a "celestial body" that it be spherical, i.e. on the grounds that his position was self-contradictory and unintelligible. The orthodox of the day saw the issue as what Ayer would call "analytic", but such an argument begs the question because the issue is what belongs to a given concept, or at least what ought to belong. The defence "But that's just what we mean" is not, by itself, ultimate in such cases.

The issue between Galileo and the church authorities would have been "merely verbal", the result of adopting different conventions, if both parties understood the issue in the same way but simply chose different terms to describe it.

> The error which seems to lie at the root of (strong) conventionalism is that the terms in which we describe the world can be radically divorced from our understanding of it.... But the concepts which we have--and therefore in one sense the "terms" which we are able to employ--are not a conventional matter. For they reflect the understanding we have of the world. We cannot enlarge that understanding without extending the range of the concepts we possess.[8]

So Galileo's claim about the moon was not merely a proposal for a new set of terms, but an insight into how things are which involved using certain terms in a new way. Problems of understanding arise, vested interests aside, because the new view is presented in the old language (the other sense of "terms"), but old language used somewhat differently. (Ramsey might say "oddly".) There is a shift in categories. "To see a claim as one of insight we need to inform it with two different backgrounds in relation to each of which it may be seen as having a different standing in grammar."[9] What was for Galileo an empirical claim was for his Ptolemaic opponents a schoolboy's error. To use Wittgenstein's language here, what was for the authorities a rule of testing was itself being subjected to tests by Galileo. Galileo's investigations were not simply an illicit move in an old game but, rather, were a paradigm for

moves in a new game.

There is, then, no sharp boundary between grammatical and empirical claims: some propositions it may seem merely unreasonable to doubt, others impossible to doubt. But there is a boundary here even if it cannot be drawn sharply; the broad sense of "logic" quite common since the late fifties implicitly recognizes this. For a change in grammar is a change in logic, a change in what it makes sense to say. A given claim can change its status from grammatical to empirical, from true to false, as our concepts change. The sphericalness of celestial bodies was once seen as necessarily true and is now seen as contingently false; but the change can be in the opposite direction as well, either as regards truth value or modality or both.

This should not be taken too lightly, for such changes imply changes in our form of life.

> The essential thing is that we cannot without transforming our form of life turn just any empirical proposition into a postulate, accomodate just any recalcitrant experience into our system by re-evaluating some other part of it.[10]

If, to use one final metaphor of Wittgenstein's, for the door to turn the hinges must stay put,[11] it is nonetheless true that what turns and what stays put may change. And a lot turns on this, for it is not wrong of historians to see Galileo's century as embodying great changes for the next several centuries in a germinal form. "Our talk gets its meaning from the rest of our proceedings."[12]

The use of the word "insight" by Stuart Brown stands in need of further explication. It is not equivalent to Ramsey's "disclosure" because it is not to be identified with any particular experience, though this is not to deny that certain experiences may be necessary to the attaining of certain insights. This is an important difference, though Brown's notion gets closer to Ramsey's on another point. An insight, like a disclosure, provides its own inroad into a matter. While in some sense this may be true, the way Brown lays it out is the weakest point of his account. He thinks that a genuine insight involves seeing a claim as true simultaneously with coming to understand it. No doubt this happens, but need it? Can one not understand without believing? It is not

at all clear what this position does to the exercise/application distinction drawn earlier, and Brown offers little by way of argument for his claim. He apparently believes that he has eliminated all alternatives in the course of trying to give an answer to the puzzle of why it is that unbelievers so often find the believer's claims unintelligible: of seven possible positions regarding this "intelligibility gap", he refutes all save that "religious beliefs are unintelligible to the unbeliever by virtue of his being an unbeliever".[13] It is undoubtedly true that belief and understanding are closely related, that if someone believed nothing--that 3 comes after 2, for instance--he would understand next to nothing. But this relation seems not to be one of mutual implication, though neither is it simply contingent. In the absence of very good reasons to the contrary one should be highly sceptical about locking belief and understanding together so that a non-believer cannot understand a believer's faith. It is, of course, true that any such understanding requires deep familiarity with the lives of believers, for without seeing how language fits into its surroundings proper understanding probably cannot arise. (Closely connected with this issue is the possibility of translating religious beliefs into other terms, a possibility I will discuss in Chapter Three.)

It does seem true that insights in Brown's sense share an initial unintelligibility with pseudo-insights, and must be distinguished from them somehow. Brown says:

> There is...no general recipe for deciding whether or not a proposed conceptual scheme does advance understanding of a particular matter. Hence there can be no general theory for distinguishing genuine from unwarranted claims to insight... the distinction can only be made by reference to the particulars of a given case.[14]

This is only to say that the question of the nature of the moon in the sixteenth century has no direct bearing on other issues such as the Christian concept of love and its relation to our more secular notions. Deductive argument will not often be effective in these sorts of cases because what follows from a given premise is what is at issue, though not in the sense of differing rules for <u>modus ponens</u> or the syllogism.

Rather, what follows from given premises will vary as those premises are understood differently, are understood according to different grammars.

Grammar, then, can be changed; it is not inviolable or sacrosanct. Not all departures from ordinary grammar are mistakes. But one might well follow Brown this far and not wish to follow him the next step, which is calling grammatical remarks "claims". This was certainly Wittgenstein's practice, and possibly his considered view: to call grammatical propositions or remarks true or false was to invite misunderstanding, to invite confusing them with factual claims. This is closely related to the issue raised with regard to Ramsey, that of the difference between justification and right, and I will devote most of the rest of this section to a discussion of it.

Brown begins his case for calling grammatical statements "claims" by distinguishing two requirements that can be made of any putative claim:

> (1)that the making of a genuine claim or assertion must commit a man to denying some other claim; and
> (2)that for a claim to be factual (i.e. true or false) in character, there must be considerations which would count against it.[15]

The first requirement seems related to the possibility of there being statement-making discourse, and related to the law of non-contradiction as well. It is when confronted with the second requirement that many religious statements have trouble. Ayer, who assumed them to be empirical in nature, a form of hypothesis, saw their failure to meet this requirement as a sign of unintelligibility. But other sorts of grammatical claim such as "Every event has a cause" also run into trouble here. It would be no good to deny that verification and falsification play a major role in factual discourse, for that would be to ignore most twentieth century analytic philosophy.

Brown thinks that calling grammatical claims "claims", and thereby allowing them as candidates for truth and falsity, need not commit us to holding that they are known to be true. To require that would be to demand that they meet the second condition above, which would be to treat them as factual. As Wittgenstein said, "One says 'I know' where can also say 'I believe' or 'I suspect' where one can find out".[16] So Phillips

was right in saying that there is no "finding out" where God is concerned, but this is not simply a peculiarity of a certain religious discourse. There is no "finding out" with a grammatical claim such as "Every event has a cause" because were we to doubt this we would call our whole language-game into question. There are no other propositions which could be more certain and support it: it is part of our framework.

> And now if I were to say "It is my unshakeable conviction that etc", this means in the present case too that I have not consciously arrived at the conviction by following a particular line of thought, but that it is anchored in all my questions and answers, so anchored I cannot touch it.[17]

The expression "cannot touch it" may be a bit misleading, and we must be careful not to assume that all grammatical remarks are equally removed from "the route followed by enquiry",[18] equally embedded in our way of life.

On Brown's view, then, there will be two characteristic sorts of advance in human "knowledge", one consisting of the acquisition of further facts or information within a set of concepts, and another which

> ...makes possible the finding of new information by providing a change in, or extension of, concepts already available. It is first and foremost, an advance in understanding...it makes possible a use of concepts in terms of which new facts could be stated or discovered...it involves coming to find intelligible what formerly did not make sense to one.[19]

Grammatical claims are, if the word is not too misleading, presupposed by empirical claims.

> For grammatical claims provide the context in which true or false matter-of-fact claims alike may be made. It is the possibility of a claim's being either true or false which depends on the truth of some grammatical claim or other. For grammatical claims specify the relevant features of a conception of reality whose limits mark the limits of what can intelligibly be claimed.[20]

One must, I think, be careful here to heed the following warning of Wittgenstein:

> The rules of grammar may be called "arbitrary", if that is to mean that the aim of the grammar is nothing but that of the language.
> If someone says "If our language had not this grammar, it could not express these facts"--it should be asked what

"could" means here.[21]

It is important that this be made clear: Brown is not arguing for the superiority of one grammar over another, and neither am I. I will turn to the question of whether and how one can do that in a moment. He is saying that for language to be the statement-making thing that it is some grammatical claims are necessary: "if I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put".[22] One might say that the grammatical change wrought by Galileo and his contemporaries in the notion of a "celestial body" made it possible for us to know certain facts about the solar system. This seems unobjectionable so long as it serves to emphasize how that change is related to the rise of modern science. Wittgenstein's warning is against assuming too much force for the modality in such situations, because we have no clear idea of what possibilities were not realized, nor even a very clear one of what "possibility" means in this context. It is important to see how one grammar arises only, as it were, when the ground has been prepared for it in history. This logical worry about "could" need not lead us to deny this, need not contradict our picture of language and knowledge as "generative". But we should, I think, remain actively historical in outlook, pressing those who desire a more "transcendental" conclusion to say why "would" is not enough, to say why "could" should be used instead.

(ii) Can grammatical issues be discussed rationally?

The existence of grammatical claims, says Brown, is intimately bound up with language being the rule-governed activity that it is, for in marking the limits of what can intelligibly be claimed grammatical claims function like rules which can only be broken for limited and special purposes (such as making a joke).[23] They are rules which can be changed, for the limits of what can intelligibly be claimed may change with changes in our life, but they are not "merely conventional" in the sense discussed earlier.[24] So the reasons for calling grammatical remarks "claims", and for treating them as issues which can be rationally and reasonably discussed, have to do both with their relation to factual claims and with the fact that they are not sacrosanct.[25] Reasons can be given for and against a given claim, but such reasons stop short of being logically

compelling. This has led some philosophers to deny that grammatical disputes are cognitive in nature. But more than simply pragmatic reasons can be given, for it is open to one to argue that a given grammar is inadequate in a stronger sense. Take Berkeley's account of causality, for instance, which Brown treats as an example. Berkeley held that there need be an agent for every cause, that to support a cause without an agent was unintelligible. We can reply that this is to make different sorts of cases look too much alike. The two-fold claim that an agent is not always necessary and that the resulting view admits of subtler distinctions than Berkeley's (is pragmatically superior) would not, of course, be easy for a Berkeleyan to see: to anyone raised on this view our view would constitute an insight (or at least a putative one). The "deciding" of such an issue will, at times, take on the look of a historical process, but why should all cognitive issues be <u>simply</u> decided? Is there a good reason to link the cognitive to particular procedures? I don't see any except the philosopher's ambition to be ultimate judge. He has no right to be, for philosophers are historical creatures as much as anyone else. There is certainly a role for the philosopher to play in clarifying grammar and in advocating changes, but at most this in one seat on the jury.

All that has been said calls into question any easy assumption about the correspondence between our thought and the world. But since the <u>very idea</u> of correspondence is called into question this does not lead to scepticism. Neither does it mean that grammar is not "about the world", for the simple and exhaustive bifurcation of "empirical claim" ("facts") and "human attitudes" ("values") is itself called into question. Science, at the level of factual discourse, gives us a series of methodologies which separate out "the world" from what we bring to it. This is not possible at the level of grammar: it is not that we cannot apply what we wish we could, but that we have no clear idea what such procedures would be, for <u>any</u> would presuppose <u>some</u> grammar. The demand for an account of our representations <u>and</u> the world, such that we could inspect the relation, and which was not one of our representations, is

incoherent. If we feel this as a lack that is because we have wrongly estimated what science is: it never was, nor could be, the Archimedean point some have dreamed of. With Wittgenstein's epistemology we have a category--"grammar"--with which we can work towards a fuller picture of our language and knowledge, one which avoids the mistake of assuming that everything said is either a factual claim or a "value" (and hence in a strong sense optional). Saying, however, is not in this case doing, and I will try to say more about this in the next chapter, and I will also try to show how it is one goes about, in detail, revealing the grammar of a kind of discourse.

It should be emphasized again that no religious tradition consists of solely grammatical claims--and that the boundary between factual and grammatical claims cannot always be sharply drawn. A dispute as to whether such-and-such a person is a saint or prophet, for instance, is to some extent a factual dispute. It is important to realize that the grammar of a given faith has been built up over time, and that it may well have changed over that time. When I claim that "God exists" is a grammatical claim, I mean that it is such in relation to orthodox, Biblically-based Christianity. For some sects it may well be an empirical claim, and it may have stood in a quite different relation to its linguistic surroundings in Moses' day. In saying that religion has a "different grammar" from science, I am claiming, in part, that "God exists" stands in a different relation to other claims in that realm of discourse than "unicorns exist" does in zoology. Philosophers have underestimated the importance of the particular religious traditions in pursuit of a "highest common factor" which, say, the ontological argument proves. But this leaves "...the prior question about what concept of God would be an adequate one in a vacuum".[26] Different religions will be different grammars here, and despite his sensitivity to particular examples, this is precisely where Ramsey's metaphysical theology was weakest.

> The question of the existence of God, raised as an external question, must be construed as one which calls in question the language of religion as a whole. For the statement "God exists", if it is true, could only be true as a meta-grammatical statement. To reject it as false is to reject

> the linguistic framework which requires it to be true. Neither a religious nor a non-religious framework could make it possible to regard the existence of God as a question of fact. As an internal question the question whether there is a God could only be whether a non-theistic grammar of religion is possible. But that question can only be raised within the linguistic framework of a given tradition.[27]

And this would require showing that there were sufficient other resources to maintain the way of life paradigmatic for that tradition. As Brown says, a religion is not

> ...a set of metaphysical beliefs in some way connected with a set of liturgical practices. It is a way of life. It would be wrong to recongize this by adding a system of morality which is itself intelligible in secular terms.[28]

I will try to say more about why this is so in Chapter Three. I should emphasize that here Brown is in broad agreement with Phillips and Winch in emphasizing that

> a religious understanding must be internally connected with a religious way of life in that to understand the meaning of human life in a religious way is to see the possibility of its being lived in a particular way.[29]

This is why the life of Jesus is so important, for he shows what otherwise enigmatic phrases such as "Be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves" amount to as resources for a lived human life. People with very little philosophical or theological acumen can recognize this, and it is intimately bound up with his being "saviour".

I do not think it is too important whether or not we allow grammatical claims to be candidates for truth and falsity so long as we recognize both those features which lead us not to doubt them in the ordinary course of things--their relations with factual discourse--and those features which allow disputes over them to have a very large element of reason to them--those features which make them "cognitive" issues. In the rest of this thesis I will speak of the "truth" and "relative adequacy" of grammatical claims interchangeably.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1. L. Wittgenstein, PI, 1, 373.

2. Stuart C. Brown, Do Religious Claims Make Sense? (hereafter DRCMS) SCM, London, 1969, p.

3. _____, DRCMS, p.14.

4. _____, DRCMS, p.49.

5. _____, DRCMS, p.47.

6. _____, DRCMS, p.105. Does this mean that grammatical claims are presuppositions of other beliefs? If we say so then what we do in our language-game always rests on a tacit presupposition: "...doesn't a presupposition imply a doubt? And doubt may be entirely lacking. Doubting has an end." --Wittgenstein, PI, p.179. I will say more about the "ends" of our various speech acts in Chapter Three.

7. _____, DRCMS, p.56.

8. _____, DRCMS, p.117.

9. _____, DRCMS, p.61.

10. Roger A. Shiner, "Wittgenstein and the Foundations of Knowledge", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol.Lxxviii, 1977/78.

11. L. Wittgenstein, On Certainty, Blackwell's, Oxford, 1969, #343.

12. _____, On Certainty, Blackwell's, Oxford, 1969, #229.

13. S.C. Brown, DRCMS, p.xvii.

14. _____, DRCMS, p.176.

15. _____, DRCMS, p.101.

16. L. Wittgenstein, PI, p.221e note.

17. _____, On Certainty (hereafter OC), #103.

18. L. Wittgenstein, OC, #88.

19. S.C. Brown, DRCMS, p.118.

20. _____, DRCMS, p.118.

21. L. Wittgenstein, PI, 1, 497.

22. _____, OC, #343.

23. There is an interesting book by Sten H. Stenson entitled Sense and Nonsense in Religion, Abingdon, 1969, in which the author tries to show the similarities between religious discourse and various kinds of jokes. The analysis is, however, merely suggestive, hence I do not discuss this book.

24. In the Tractatus Wittgenstein espouses a view of logic not that different from Ayer's, hence his attraction at that time to the so-called Vienna Circle. The view of logic, too, as a matter of "natural history" emerges in his later writings.

25. Phillips says that the grammar of our discourse "determines" how things are for us. The word is, however, quite charged, and using it makes it look as though we cannot call our grammar into question. That we cannot do this in an absolute way does not mean that we cannot do it in given cases, however, and I will try to say more about this in Chapter Four. A more fortunate side-effect of Phillips' use of "determine" is that it emphasizes that the believer does not simply treat his religion as something to be tested, but also uses it as a rule of testing. Philosophy can help to make it clear who is testing what with what.

26. S.C. Brown, DRCMS, p.171.

27. _____, DRCMS, p.167.

28. _____, DRCMS, p.135.

29. _____, DRCMS, p.177.

CHAPTER THREE

PERSPECTIVES AND LOGICAL RELATIONS

> The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is clearly evident. The tragic hero still remains within the ethical. He lets one expression of the ethical find its telos in a higher expression of the ethical....With Abraham the situation was different. By his act he overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher telos outside of it...."
>
> --Soren Kierkegaard

(i) "Hard", "Soft", and "Non-Perspectivism"

In this section I want to consider what has been said so far from the standpoint of a categorical scheme used by J.W. McClendon and James S. Smith, in their book Understanding Religious Convictions. Like almost any classificatory system its use is limited, and it should never take the place of detailed discussion of particular issues. Nevertheless, I hope it is of some use in placing the views which I have discussed thus far on some sort of map of the philosophical terrain.

This entire scheme is very much related to the issue of whether or not there can be an independent justification of religious belief: the next section will constitute a more detailed discussion of this issue and the issue of whether religious claims are translatable or reducible to other terms.

A "non-perspectivist" is one who, in some strong sense, holds that reason is conceptually neutral. This belief is most often accompanied by some sort of scheme/content distinction such that it is (in principle) possible to sort out what is "really there" in the world and what we bring to any inquiry as part of our conceptual scheme. This often takes the incoherent form of a demand for a neutral account of the relation between our representations and that which they represent, but perhaps it need not do so. It does seem open to a non-perspectivist to claim

that some one conception of reality is absolutely right, though spelling out this latter notion is notoriously difficult. Ayer, in his pursuit of one universal criterion of meaning, is a non-perspectivist, for he thinks he has found a test against which any statement can be judged. For the non-perspectivist there is nothing particularly problematic about religion, and reason, whether through specific methodologies such as science or through articulate philosophical discussion, is capable of settling--again in a strong sense--such issues.

The opposite polar category to non-perspectivism is "hard-perspectivism". The hard-perspectivist maintains that conceptual differences on fundamental issues are an ultimate fact of human existence, and that as a result decisive, even serious, argument between those who so differ is not possible. To be sure, conversions take place, but they do so for non-rational reasons and argument and inference play no decisive role. D.Z. Phillips, as we have seen, denies that any justification of religion on independent grounds is possible and that any search for it is based on misunderstanding. The important issue in properly understanding Phillips is what he takes this to imply. At times he wants to allow for quite a degree of latitude in the operations of reason on such conceptual questions, but at other times he denies this. He certainly allows that grammar can change, but the crucial issue is to what extent such change can be rational and to what extent it is merely a manifestation of brute and unbridgeable differences among us. Phillips, when stating his position most clearly, seems to lapse always into a hard-perspectivist position, as we saw in his discussion of sameness and difference.

The position which I have been arguing for is what might be called "soft-perspectivism". On such a view conceptual (grammatical) differences are seen as important but not as unbridgeable, as real and enduring but not ultimate. The hard thing is to state such a position correctly so that it does not quickly collapse into one of the more extreme poles. I know of no transcendental argument which simply and straightforwardly accomplishes this; it seems that one must be content to criticize both extremes such that they become untenable, and that this is the only prodecure available to us.

Stuart Brown certainly wants to be a soft-perspectivist, for this

is the direction of his account of why grammatical disputes are not merely pragmatic. The problem is that what he says about belief and understanding, his too simply yoking together of these notions, strongly counteracts this train of thought. Still, in as much as he has shown that grammar can both "determine" what it makes sense to say and yet be open to revision, he has gone a good way towards establishing some form of soft-perspectivism. Phillips, of course, need not allow this just yet. He might claim that all Brown has shown is that certain "foreground" cases can be rationally discussed, but what is important here are the very fundamental "background" considerations, the real "depth grammar", of our thought. I do not really know what to say to this except to take the following procedural stance: if such ultimate differences are there we will surely encounter them in the discussion of more particular grammatical issues. This latter method is likely to be considerably more productive of understanding than direct arguments on the issue because it is so easy in such general arguments for language to go "on holiday", and for one to become embroiled in dispute which one cannot connect to any other issues.

The dangers of such a simple classification scheme as I am now using are manifest when one tries to decide how to classify Ian Ramsey. He was certainly not a straightforward non-perspectivist for he recognizes that argument plays a more indirect role in religious issues than such a position would allow. There is, however, a tendency in his thought to treat disclosures as something like an independent ground for the truth of religious claims, though the fact that models are "there" from the start modifies this tendency. In so far as there is one "best map", and that this is an issue which can be rationally discussed, Ramsey was far from hard-perspectivism. Perhaps he was a proto-soft-perspectivist.

It is clear that these "perspectival" categories form something of a continuum with the term "soft-perspectivism" covering a broad range of positions which lie between polar opposites. I hope to stake out some ground along this continuum, and the next section is an attempt to more positively characterize the nature of the "logical independence" which I believe religious discourse manifests.

(ii) The four logically possible relations of religious discourse to the other discourses in terms of a teleological analysis

In this section I want to give an answer to the question "What is it that makes the different modes of discourse different?", and from a different perspective than has been discussed so far. It is an odd question, no doubt, and one which may harbour many muddles. It almost certainly admits of several answers, and it is my belief that an answer framed in terms of the objectives of given sorts of claims is potentially at least as illuminating as any other way of answering.

My general answer is that different goals (ends, objectives) are pursued and achieved in the different modes of speech. One can always ask of a speech-act what its corresponding goal or achievement is. To press the game analogy, certain moves are made in one game, others in another: one does not "score touchdowns" in chess, nor "castle" in football. But a game, of course, is not simply a set of rules: "The game, one would like to say, has not only rules but also a point".[1] How one describes or characterizes certain moves or possibilities may help to reveal or may obscure that point, and this is as true of linguistic objectives as any other. We have all read those supposedly humorous descriptions of sports such as "golf is a game in which men hit a little ball around with sticks and try to get it in a hole". Even this sort of description may have its place, if, for example, one is confronted by a man who ignores his family for golf. But much funnier than these descriptions is the spectacle of the philosopher who gives this sort of description of some phenomena in the belief that he has uttered "the truth" in some grand sense which renders insignificant what others might say. Amusing, I say, but also dangerous.

The dangers involved in speaking of "objectives" are similar to those involved in speaking of meaning as use. One can quite easily make the issue appear overly functional in the sense which Phillips discussed regarding superstition: one can make the objectives of a given mode of discourse look like ends which could be perceived and sought independently of the discourse itself. But the function of a discourse is not something it performs only, as it were, accidentally: "the aim of the grammar is

nothing but that of the language".[2] The danger is, if another analogy may help, of making the relationship between a way of speaking and its end look like that which obtains between a screw-driver and its being used to pry a jammed window open. It is much more the sort of "internal" relation which obtains between screw-drivers and screws.[3]

The main question to be answered is: does religious discourse set its own objectives which are as logically different from those of science as those of science are from those of ethics? Or can the objectives of religious discourse be stated in other terms, be "reduced" to non-religious discourse. There are, I believe, four logically possible positions[4] which could obtain between religion and the other discourses from the standpoint of teleology. I will lay out each relation briefly and then proceed to a more general discussion of the issues involved.

Relation #1: On this first view of the relations among the discourses the objectives of a religious act (including a speech-act) are not reducible to, nor statable in, other terms. To use an example of Winch's (without meaning to attribute this view to him), "praying" cannot be treated as simply a species of "making requests of" since what counts as a "request", an "answer", or any such term is quite different with God than in human cases. The objectives of prayer must be stated in religious terms, though what those objectives are may be an area of disagreement in theology, with accounts such as "Prayer is fundamentally an act of response to Jesus Christ" and "Prayer is communication with the Divine Thou" being among possible contenders. The point is that these are religious accounts and they are irreducible and ultimate on this view.

If an explicit picture can be of help, one may represent this relation as a Venn diagram with all the intersecting sets empty, or see the discourses as a number of non-intersecting circles. Each "realm" is logically autonomous, sets its own rules and objectives, and all "shared" words are ambiguous with their meaning varying from context to context. This is a view which Phillips says he wants to avoid,[5] yet it seems to be what his remarks about sameness and difference amount to.

This view is one response to the insight that there are differing

criteria for meaningfulness, and to the insight that no justification is possible for religious language--"justification" in the sense of an inferential warrant based on evidence which is "independent". The problem with such a view is that it either makes conceptual change look impossible or pays a very high price, namely, allowing change, but making it often less than rational. Proponents of this sort of view may not see this as a problem, but many others are troubled by such strong "relativism".

Relation #2: On this second relation the various discourses are all subordinate to religion in the sense that religious resources can be used in the completion of other inquiries. Such enquiries may also come into contradiction with religious claims. On the strong reading of this relation religion reveals the end of all other discourses or inquiries to be the same, namely, God. He is not their "end" in the sense that they knowingly seek Him, but the postulation of God alone offers them logical completion so that He is presupposed. Both the physicist in search of cosmic origins and the person in search of the ultimate basis of ethical obligation will arrive (if they reason well) at the same source, viz. God.

This relation is not very fashionable these days, except perhaps among neo-Thomists and certain Fundamentalists. Ramsey, in his more metaphysical moods, speaks of God-talk "capping" the various disciplines and modes of explanation, however, and a good many "evangelical" theologians argue for a view close to this. It may be pictured, somewhat simply but not unfairly, as a number of circles (the other discourses) contained within one larger circle (religion). If this relation is right then religion and metaphysics seem well-nigh indistinguishable, and the superscience view of metaphysics which the positivists mocked is not all that far removed from this relation. Adherents to such a view have not, so far as I know, had much to say about how prayer, for example, fits in to this scheme, but there seems room for only a mystical account. Similarly, there is a problem with explaining how and why the results of reason and the demands of revelation do not coincide, and no very detailed accounts

have been offered to explain what seems a legitimate distinction explained well by the positivist, namely, the difference between straightforward factual claims and metaphysical ones. It does seem possible on this view that one might believe that God exists and yet not care at all, and that is curious to me.

Relation #3: While the second relation was the dominant medieval view, this third is the dominant modern view. (The influence of the absence of any developed science on the one and its dominant sociological presence for us would, I think, be an interesting historical analysis.) Here religion is seen as "mythological", as a primitive or confused way of achieving the ends of science or ethics. What is not one of these is pure delusion. Such a view is shared by those who see primitive religion as primitive science and by those who see it as a storehouse of ethical and moral insights. (The same person can, of course, see it as a mixture of both.) Religious practices may have been, and may still be, an historical necessity, but they are doomed to be replaced by better ways of saying and doing the same thing, for they are inherently confused, or at least only metaphorical and standing for something else.

A practice such as praying can be analyzed several ways according to this relation. It may be seen as primarily an infantile attempt to influence the course of events, the result of certain psychological processes; or it may be seen as a technique of meditation and moral self-improvement. In either such case it is not in any important way a logically independent practice. On this sort of view specific differences among religions are often discounted, usually being treated in institutional terms, or else seen as merely accidental. Religion on this view can be included as a subset of one or both of science and ethics; it is a small circle within a larger one.

Relation #4: This relation is perhaps the most difficult to state clearly, and especially to distinguish from relation #1. As with the first relation, religious objectives are not fully statable in other terms without falsification. But the adverb is important, for some account can be given in other terms. To say this, of course, is not nearly

enough and I hope that a clearer account may emerge through a discussion of what Christian prayer is.

In the important and well-known article "Understanding a Primitive Society"[6] Peter Winch has taken up a discussion of the purpose of prayer in the following way:

> In Judeo-Christian cultures the conception of "If it be Thy Will", as developed in the story of Job, is clearly central to the matter....Because this conception is clearly central to Christian prayers of supplication, they may be regarded from one point of view as freeing the believer from dependence on what he is supplicating for. Prayers cannot play this role if they are regarded as a means of influencing the outcome for in that case the one who prays is still dependent on the outcome. He frees himself from this by acknowledging his complete dependence on God; and this is totally unlike any dependence on the outcome precisely because God is eternal and the outcome contingent.[7]

Winch goes on to claim that Zande magical rites, while differing from Christian prayer in certain positive attitudes they express, are nonetheless very like such prayer in that they express an attitude to contingencies "...which involves recognition that one's life is subject to contingencies, rather than an attempt to control these".[8]

How would Christians respond to such an analysis? Obviously in a number of ways, and I do not know what they all might be. But many would, I think, find something right about Winch's account. But is the "point of view" from which Winch describes Christian prayer one that a Christian can occupy with regard to his own practice? I do not mean this as a psychological question: I mean <u>should</u> the Christian recognize this as an adequate account of what he is doing when he is praying? At this point I think many Christians would say that there is more to it than Winch says, that his account is incomplete. But Winch, in allowing for a variety of "positive attitudes", has allowed for this. We need to know whether this "more" is important philosophically and how it is to be described.

Winch's account is stated in non-theological language, whether Zande or Christian. This gives it a "third-party" quality and it obviates any initial charges of begging the question. Had he tried to ex-

plicate the Zande concepts in terms of the Christian idea of "the Will of God" we would have been immediately suspicious and suspected a certain falsity in his comparison. This is, no doubt, psychologically important, for it seems that one must "distance" oneself from many things to understand them well. But is it logically important that one explicate Christian notions in terms of other notions which are not "religious", and how far can this procedure be carried? Could we imagine "no remainder" at the end of such a process, or does one at some point need to use Christian terminology to explicate Christian theology? Are the truths, if they are truths, which can be learned from Winch's "point of view" such that they provide anything like a justification or refutation of religion?

As the beginning of an answer to these questions I will offer another picture or metaphor: as before, the discourses are seen as a Venn diagram, only now there are both areas of intersection and areas which are not shared, areas which are peculiar to a given mode of discourse. In fact, we might well profitably speak of "common" and "peculiar" notions, the common ones being pretty much those which Phillips designated as systematically ambigious. Some of these are "same" and "different", "real" and "unreal", "more than" and "less than", "combined" and "separate", and "dependent" and "independent". Witness this reamrk of Wittgenstein's on whether the word "understanding" is ambiguous:

> We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same: but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by another. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)... Then has "understanding" two different meanings here?--I would rather say that these kinds of use of "understanding" make up its meaning, make up my concept of understanding. For I <u>want</u> to apply the word "understanding" to all this.[9]

If another metaphor may help, our language is like the downtown skyline of a large modern city. The common terms are like those systems which connect the apparently autonomous high-rise buildings--the streets, the electric wires, the water and sewage pipes.[10] One can easily overestimate the independence of the buildings if one only looks up, if one fails to notice the streets and conduits below. That is, buildings in a

city are not just "built up" from the ground, they are also "built out", in less obvious ways, to other buildings.[11]

To return to Winch's account of prayer, we should look at the term he uses in some detail to see what sorts of words he uses. He calls these prayers "prayers of supplication", a term which conjures up connotations of asking or begging. To some extent this is a loaded term because of its past associations, but Winch does nothing much with it. So far as I can see he uses it because it has been traditionally used to name a certain sort of prayer, and that is all. He is not interested in prayers of praise or thanksgiving. He speaks of prayer as "freeing the believer from dependence on what he is supplicating for". "Freeing" and "dependence" have for us a long association with psychological contexts, with political and, to a lesser degree, scientific contexts. If Winch is saying that the believer is basically performing a psychological operation upon himself such that he feels freed, is no longer emotionally dependent on something being the case, then this is a potentially controversial claim. Not, I think, that Christians would deny something very like this, but if this sort of talk is read psychologically we tend immediately to think of a contrast with what is "actually" the case in something like a physically descriptive sense. That is, the believer will reject Winch's account if it carries with it any sort of implication that his prayers are merely a sort of "talking to himself" which somehow has the psychological consequences that he is no longer anxious about what may come to be. But neither does the believer treat his prayers as a means of "influencing the outcome", since, and Winch is right here, that would not "free" him either. Merely getting what one wants has little to do with Job, or Jesus in Gethsemane.

What Winch has done is use words which have a variety of uses with which we are all pretty familiar--believer and non-believer alike--and trade upon their resonances from these other contexts so as to walk a path between the "natural" alternative categories of psychological procedure ("internal") and technical means of control or manipulation ("external"). The Christian practice of prayer does not fall simply under

either of these categories and it seems that Winch tries to imply this by contrast: ...not a means of influencing the outcome...but a means of freeing since God is eternal. The weakness in Winch's account, it seems to me, is that he does not as strongly distance himself from a purely psychological use of "free" as he does from a technical, manipulative one. This leaves it open that he is claiming that the Christian is deluded in his "freedom", that he really is dependent on the outcome and may well be crushed by forces larger than himself while believing himself to be "free". I do not think Winch intends this, for the Christian does not deny his dependence on oxygen, gravity, food, etc.: rather, he contrasts all of these dependencies with his dependence on God. These forces themselves are dependent on God, he claims, so that <u>that</u> dependence is the important one. "Whether we live or whether we die we are God's." By itself, of course, this sort of talk leads to the picture of an arbitrary ruler dispensing divine favours by whim, and to counteract <u>this</u> kind of excess the believer speaks of God's faithfulness, the order of His Creation. The Bible moves between these two poles of regal arbitrariness and a view of God as a quasi-principle, and the theologians have tried to use the term "person" to cover both. In many ways this is akin to what Wittgenstein said about the language-game itself: "Then is there something arbitrary about this system? Yes and No. It is akin both to what is arbitrary and to what is non-arbitrary."[12]

The reader will recall that I have been at pains to deny that the grammar of our language is "arbitrary" in any sense which would license either scepticism or hard perspectivism.

> Why don't I call cookery rules arbitrary, and why am I tempted to call the rules of grammar arbitrary? Because "cookery" is defined by its end, whereas "speaking" is not. That is why the use of language is in a certain sense autonomous, as cooking and washing are not. You cook badly if you are guided in your cooking by rules other than the right ones; but if you follow other rules than those of chess you are <u>playing another game</u>; and if you follow grammatical rules other than such-and-such ones, that does not mean you say something wrong, no, you are speaking of something else.[13]

The ends or objectives of language are themselves linguistic, i.e. they

presuppose language. This has been said already. The grammar of Biblical discourse about God is highly complex, and included in it are both the claim that "God exists (is real)" and those aspects of the concept of God which Ramsey emphasized as "qualifiers". Together they do not allow the possibility that the existence of God is an empirical matter: those who treat it as such, whether they fancy themselves believers, critics, or agnostics, are playing a different game from that of the Biblical authors and redactors. The goals, ends, or objectives of Christianity are, for the most part, paradigmatically laid down in the Bible and one must learn them there, or in surroundings which maintain that grammatical tradition. Those who read the Genesis accounts and translate God's Creation of the world into a theory about the origins of the physical universe are playing a different game from that played by the ancient Hebrews--and the truth of this does not depend on those ancients having recognized that fact. If there are different ends being served, there is a different grammar, a different game.

In the rest of this section I would like to explore the following worry: since this picture of the various discourses allows for a large degree of logical independence, grants them as it were extensive "rights" in establishing their own ends or objectives, how do we tell whether this "power" is being well-exercised? This question may embody a number of confusions, not the least of which is the suggestion that there may be external or neutral standards for what constitutes an objective worth aiming for. A related question may be easier to deal with: how do we know when we set aside certain aspects of religion as beyond a non-religious approach that we are not setting aside too much? In trying to answer this question I want to discuss further the work of D.Z. Phillips, for he too has a concept of "genuine religion" which is related to logical independence in some way.

In reading Phillips one often has the uneasy feeling that some unspecified notion of genuine religion is being used to assess particular beliefs and that he is question-begging. He is often read this way by others. But things are, I think, rather more as Alan Keightley has

described:

> The concept of genuine religion is a major determining factor in all that Phillips says about the nonsensicality of subjecting religion to external criteria of rationality. In other words, Phillips is not simply saying..."Philosophy must leave everything as it is"; he is arguing for a particular view of what, in fact should be left as it is...(T)he kind of religious belief determines whether or not it is to be understood solely in terms of internal criteria or be subjected to "external" standards....As factual beliefs, whether expressed through a religious vocabulary or not, (eschatological beliefs, for instance) are subject to the standards prevailing in the mode of discourse which deals with matters of fact.[14]

The word "religion" is used in two senses by Phillips, one being the quite general sense in which we all use the term, a sense based on family resemblances among phenomena, and the other being something of a success word. "Religion" in the first sense may or may not be superstitious according to Phillips' criteria and is based on general family resemblances. But the second sense is used to describe an independent mode of speech with its own logic. (Phillips does not, of course, describe this logic teleologically.) Here religion is expressive and not fact-stating: "God" is not "...the name of an individual; it does not refer to anything".[15]

Phillips allows that religious claims can be shown to be confused, but only "religious" claims in the first sense. In a broad religious tradition given claims can be made which have their home in some other line of business, and Phillips can allow that a certain amount of what was once seen as religious has been exposed as superstitious, neurotic, a minifestation of class interest, confused metaphysics, proto-science, etc. Whether any particular case amounts to one of these or "genuine" religion is a matter which must be discussed on each case's merits.

On the view I am recommending, the fourth relation discussed in this chapter, both senses of "religion" are required, though I think that "genuine religion" is not to be defined the way Phillips attempts. There is in many cases no sharp boundary between religious and non-religious language, especially when a common term is used. Winch, for instances, uses the word "free" in a sense very close to the religious one, and

certainly different from the merely psychological sense. The farther one tries to go in giving an account of religion in non-religious terms, the more what one says will look like falsity rather than merely incompleteness. At some point one must use the peculiar notions of the given religion in order to say more, terms such as "God", "Saviour", "Christ", "sin", etc. Reaching this point does not bring matters to an end, however, for there remains the sort of grammatical debate I discussed in Chapter Two, and there is also "internal" theological debate. The relative merits of differing conceptions of reality can be discussed. Once again common notions will be crucial, and the possibility of suggesting new uses of these seems indefinitely open. This is the area in which valid apologetic argument may be pursued. Such discussion is part of our ongoing human struggle to find new and better ways to live together based on what we share. That we are born, that we die, that we are vulnerable to attack and injury, that we form close and intense relations, that we are capable of great magnanimity and great cruelty and selfishness--these facts are the basis for our understanding one another, even though there is no neutral way of understanding them. We need to heed the wisdom in this remark of Wittgenstein's, and apply it even more widely:

> Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country with a language quite strange to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people there gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on?
> The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.[16]

We can, if we are careful, speak of what that behaviour manifests:

> ...behind all the relativities of language and convention there is a common trait which is no longer language but which looks to an ever-possible verbalization, and for which the well tried word 'reason' is, perhaps, not the worst.[17]

This does not mean that reason is conceptually neutral except in the limited sense that we cannot set boundaries to our understanding in the way the hard-perspectivist would have.

> We can express everything in words and can try to come to agreement about everything.
> That we are limited by our finitude and that only a truly

> infinite conversation could entirely realize this pretention is, of course, true.[18]

My view allows that any statement of objectives is relative to an understanding, and that a superior understanding may reject or refine the objectives of an inferior one. The process of showing which is superior is the dialogue discussed in Chapter Two. It will not, in general be possible to perform a reduction of religion into other terms, whether of science, or ethics, or anything else. Ways of speaking which are logically distinct may, of course, cease to be so in the future, and may be "absorbed" into one another. But should this happen it will involve real changes in our thinking and acting as well, logical changes in the nature of our objectives, and we cannot predict such changes.

"Science" will never absorb "religion" precisely because for this to happen both would have to become what they are not now. On this I agree with Phillips.[19] This does not lead to religion being cut off from certain aspects of human life: it is, I think, quite right to recognize that a religion such as Christianity has something to say about the human situation, and if a philosophical account denies this it falsifies the nature of religious belief. My account of logical independence in terms of objectives does not lead to such consequences since it is the objectives of a given speech-act, and not its subject matter, that are logically independent. This simply means that when the devout Christian physicist says that God created the world he is not offering a theory which could compete with, say, the big bang theory. Talk of God's creation neither directly competes with, nor completes a physical analysis, but is a move to a different logical plane.

In general, then, there is no answer possible to the worry as to whether we set aside "too much" to a given religion in a given instance. We must examine the grammar of our discourse and see. Each new candidate for "too much" calls for a decision on our part in the light of what else we know and believe, and no eternal criteria can be established. General categories such as "religion" and "science" are not very useful at the level of the particular issue, and it is there that our most important thinking takes place. Focussing on the objectives of a given speech-act

directs our attention here, and that is a precondition of seeing things more clearly.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

1. L. Wittgenstein, PI, 1, 564.

2. _____, PI, 1, 497.

3. I owe this analogy to Professor Roger Shiner.

4. With the exception of Relation #4 these are "logically pure", not to say extreme, positions; most real accounts are mixtures of elements from two or three relations. But this does not make these relations useless in clarifying certain positions, for they remain quite applicable to cases.

5. D.Z. Phillips, ed., Religion and Understanding (hereafter R&U), Blackwell's, Oxford, 1967, p.196.

6. Peter Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society" in R&U, p.35.

7. _____, in R&U, p.35. The word "contingencies" might be seen by some theologians as contentious, but all Winch needs, I think, is the limited Robbie Burns sense in which our best laid plans can be upset by circumstance.

8. _____, R&U, p.35.

9. L. Wittgenstein, PI, 1, 531-2.

10. I owe this metaphor, and a good deal else in coming to see the importance and applicability of teleological analysis, to Professor Richard Bosley.

11. This picture is somewhat different from certain once fashionable views of "ordinary language", views which treat a certain sort of speech (often "object language") as somehow either prior to or paradigmatic for other uses and other contexts. There is no language-game called "ordinary language" which is importantly distinct from other kinds. Nor is there, as Ramsey seems to have assumed, a basic game called "object language". Rather, there are only certain common notions (in both its usual senses) which, when compared with very highly developed discourse such as that of physics, look vague and ordinary.

The picture of the "special" discourses as based on "stretched meaning" from ordinary language is not useless, but it can be very misleading if it is taken to imply that we ever spoke just "ordinary language" in such a way that it could become a test for the meaningfulness of other discourses. It does not follow from the fact that at one time there was no such thing as physics that what there was "ordinary language", and I take it that Wittgenstein's arguments at 1-38 of the Philosophical Investigations have debunked "object language". On the Venn diagram "ordinary language" is not one of the main circles, but a certain sort of use of what lies in the areas of overlap. There is no Ordinary Language Building in the city, and it was not the first building there, since demolished. Even so-called "primitive" peoples exhibit great variety in their use of language.

12. L. Wittgenstein, Zettel, #358.

13. _____, Zettel, #320.

14. Alan Keightley, WGG, p.68. The assumption that one can very profitably speak of a mode of discourse which deals with matters of fact is, I think, a hangover from positivism: I will discuss this more fully when I discuss in what sense God is "other" than a human product in Chapter Four.

15. D.Z. Phillips, RWE, p.148.

16. L. Wittgenstein, PI, 1, 206. In "Understanding a Primitive Society" Peter Winch makes a similar point by talking about such Immensely important facts of human existence as copulation, birth, and death as in some sense "limiting concepts", as things which no language--no human language--could fail to have concepts for, and which are essential to the "open-texture" of human communication. This is very much related to Wittgenstein's "agreement in judgements", and his idea that philosophy is remarks on our "natural history".

17. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (hereafter T&M), Barden & Cumming trans., Seabury, New York, 1975, p.496.

18. _____, T&M, p.422.

19. D.Z. Phillips, CofP, p.26: "If there were a union of religions this would be because of changes within the religions united."

CHAPTER FOUR

IS GOD A LANGUAGE-GAME?

> True and substantial wisdom principally consists of two parts, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. But, while these two branches of knowledge are intimately connected, which of them precedes the other is not easy to discover.
>
> --John Calvin

(i) The otherness of God

One of the most common criticisms levelled at D.Z. Phillips' account of religious language is that it leads to religion being cut off from the rest of life. I have denied that this criticism is valid as regards what I said in Chapter Three, and we need to see how much there is in it with respect to Phillips' views. I believe that much of the criticism that has been directed at Phillips is misguided, but that critics have rightly sensed something wrong with his account. They have, too often, misidentified what that something is, and I hope I can do something in this chapter towards rectifying this situation.

I want to discuss in what sense God can be said to be "other", for Phillips has said some very interesting things about this. The Bible makes much of the fact that God's ways are not our ways, that He is Holy, and not to be compared with His creatures. I speak of God's otherness rather than His existence because it is well-nigh impossible for us to hear any claim of existence as other than a scientific, empirical claim. The major issue to be discussed as between Phillips and me is what the appropriate contrast to "empirical" might be. This will involve some discussion of the philosophical term "reference" since Phillips uses that term to distinguish religion from any and all empirical investigation. I will argue that he need not do this, and that he ought not to have used

this notion to begin with for it is what leads him to a view of religion as cut off from certain areas of human life. An advantage that a teleological account possesses here is that it requires one to be somewhat specific about objectives, and this seems to me a better way of getting at logical differences than using such broad notions as "fact-stating" and "reference". I hope to give some good reasons for thinking that such tools are too imprecise to reveal the important differences between religious claims and other kinds, and they tend to give us a false impression of what the believer's faith amounts to.

God's otherness is closely related to his existence as a philosophical issue. Phillips says that "the philosopher wants to know what is meant by 'real' ('exists') in the statement 'God is real (exists)'".[1] We have already seen what Phillips has to say about the tendency to compare the existence of God to that of a physical object. But we have a fairly clear idea of how physical objects are "other" to us: they are relatively enduring, are made up of certain sorts of combinations of atoms, can be seen, touched, heard, tasted, etc. If God is not other in this sense, then what sort of otherness does he possess?

We have also seen that religious beliefs have a different grammar from empirical propositions, and this means that the criteria for the truth of religious statements are different from that of empirical claims, and that different consequences follow upon such truth being accepted. In Phillips' words,"to ask whether God exists is not to ask a theoretical question. If it is to mean anything at all, it is to wonder about praising and praying; it is to wonder whether there is anything in all that".[2] In the context of a discussion of prayer Phillips has said that "...a conviction that one is talking to oneself is the death of prayer",[3] hence the believer must believe that God is other than himself in some sense. This is what has led philosophers to suppose that one must verify whether or not God is really other than a believer's projection. According to Phillips, "the philosopher is guilty of deep misunderstanding if he thinks that his task in discussing prayer is to try to determine whether contact is made with God; to understand prayer is to understand what it is to

talk to God".[4] What Phillips wants to oppose is the picture which leaves as the only alternatives that either one is talking to someone or something "out there", or one is talking to oneself.

> Many people feel that unless prayer is talking to someone "out there", who is "there" in a quasi-physical sense, prayer becomes little more than psychological phenomenon in the person who prays....But...this objection is based on the hankering after the old spatial model, in terms of which God's reality is likened to the externality of the planets.[5]

Both Phillips and I hold that this is a category mistake, for God is not an object, nor even an existent among existents, according to Christian theology.[6] (It is not clear who ever held "the old spatial model" and Phillips nowhere considers the possibility that such talk is metaphor for otherness.)

But if God is not spatially external one must still account for the fact that the believer "...contemplates something other than himself".[7] But "other" in what sense? And how is such "otherness" related to how things are? Is the believer deluded? Or is "God"-talk a convoluted way of referring to the same old physical world we all know? I want to approach these issues by contrasting Phillips' views with those of certain other theologians and philosophers who make no general philosophical claims to be working outside the categories of fact (empirical claim) and human value (attitude or interpretation). I believe that Phillips is most often misread by such people and that there are possibilities in his account which even he has failed to recognize and develop. I hope to show this in the remainder of this chapter.

In a Royal Institute of Philosophy symposium at Lancaster in 1975 Phillips and Richard Swinburne read papers on "The Problem of Evil". I do not want to discuss here the specific issues raised in those papers. Rather, I want to look at some remarks made by the chairman of that symposium, John Hick, who characterized the difference between Phillips' position and Swinburne's neo-Irenaen theodicy as follows:

> Thus far the difference between them might seem to be that while they agree as to the reality both of evil and of God, Swinburne thinks that it is and Phillips that it is not pos-

> sible, to <u>show</u> the compatibility between them. But I fancy their difference is really much deeper than this. For reading Phillips' paper in the light of his other writings, I take it that he denies the existence of an all-powerful and limitlessly loving God. I take it, that is, that he denies that in addition to all the many human consciousnesses there is another consciousness which is the consciousness of God, and that this God is the creator of the universe....I take it that he rejects this belief as a crude misunderstanding of religious language and holds that, rightly understood, "the existence of God" consists of man's use of theistic language within the context of a pattern of religious life ....If there is no God--except as a thought in men's minds, a concept operating within our theistic language--then the destructive power of suffering is just a dreadful fact.[8]

If I may paraphrase Hick, he thinks that Phillips' position amounts to the claim that "God is a language-game". Phillips' response to these remarks of Hick merit study.

Phillips says that what he denies is that the "existence of an all-powerful and limitlessly loving God" should be elucidated in terms of "another consciousness" "...in addition to all the many human consciousnesses". <u>That</u>, he says, is a philosopher's gloss, and a grossly misleading one, on the nature of religious belief.[9] God is neither an "additional consciousness" nor "a thought in men's minds", and Hick's putting the issue this way betrays deep misunderstanding--it calls in question whether he speaks of the Christian God. This is closely related to Phillips' claim that the categories of "empirical proposition" and "human attitude" are inadequate to deal with religious beliefs.[10] It does not follow, he says, from a denial that religious beliefs are empirical hypotheses that they are therefore "...human attitudes, values conferred, as it were, by individuals on the world around them".[11] And here we touch the crux of the problem: surely the believer holds that God's reality is independent of his thoughts and beliefs. Phillips admits this but he also says that this is not the independence of a separate biography.[12] Hick, it seems, reads this as a denial that God is anything other than what is said and done by believers, a kind of religious fiction. Phillips certainly fosters such a reading when he applies to this kind of case the Wittgensteinian insight that the meaning of a

word is not a subjective matter but is public. This makes it look as though he denies subjectivity on the part of the individual believer only to replace it with a kind of "objectivity" possessed by the language-game which leaves it, as it were, floating and out of touch with any enduringly other than human reality. At least this is how Hick reads him.

> On Phillips' account hope remains a major Christian virtue but,
>
> ...the believer's hope is not hope <u>for</u> anything, moral improvement, for example, since he has already recognized that there is no hope of that. It is simply hope, hope in the sense of the ability to live with himself. But this ability is not the result of endeavour but of contemplation...(it) is given by God as the result of, or as the answer to, a certain kind of contemplation of one's own life, and of one's relationships with other people. It is in this sense that a man's hope is not in himself.[13]

But, according to Phillips, no <u>individual</u> could give in this way, hence "God" is not the name of an individual; "...it does not refer to anything".[14] Rather, religious discourse is "expressive". It is far from clear to me what a term like "individual" means all by itself and what Phillips means to deny here. Since he has put the issue in term of the notion of reference, and contrasted this with what is "expressive", it is to the issue of reference I now turn.

In his book <u>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</u> Richard Rorty distinguishes two senses of the word "refer" which are often conflated in philosophical discussion.

> The term can mean either (a) a factual relation which holds between an expression and some other portion of reality whether anybody knows it holds or not, or (b) a purely "intentional" relation which can hold between an expression and a non-existent object. Call one "reference" and the other "talking about".[15]

On this analysis we can "talk about" Sherlock Holmes but we cannot refer to him, while we can both "refer to" <u>and</u> "talk about" Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. What would Phillips say to this? Which sense, if either, does he mean to deny with respect to "God"? He would certainly deny that the term "God" refers in sense (a) because God is not a "portion of reality". "People who ask, 'But does the picture or belief...refer to anything?'

want to be shown what the picture pictures. But if this could be done it would not be the same kind of picture."[16] But if there is no point in asking whether the picture refers is there point in denying it? Would Phillips opt for only sense (b) of "reference"?

The answer is far from clear because Phillips devotes next to no time spelling out what he understands "reference" to mean. If he holds that one can "talk about" God in sense (b) while also denying that the word refers in sense (a), and does not give us any other sense of "refer", then he can rightly be called an atheist. God joins Sherlock Holmes in being classified as a fiction. Alan Keightley has put the point in the following way: "Phillips is an atheist in the sense that his analyses deny a concept of 'God' which includes the idea that 'God' refers to something which is 'there' whether people believe in him or not".[17] Stuart Brown has made a similar point in saying that for Phillips (and Winch) religious claims are not "impersonally true" in the way in which scientific claims are. Phillips himself puts the point, if it is the same point, in a somewhat different way. He says that he denies both "theoretical theism" and "theoretical atheism" as bad philosophy. But the believer says that he is judged by He who is other than any sort of human product, who is other than all creation. Phillips seems to straightforwardly contradict this, for a God who is not "there" whether people believe in him or not cannot be "there" when Heaven and earth pass away. Phillips has, I think, been mislead into denying such a fundamental tenet of the believer's faith--all the while claiming only to describe it--because of his use of the notion of reference. Richard Rorty is highly critical, on what he takes to be Wittgensteinian grounds, of the whole idea of a "theory of reference". The reasons for this are quite important in coming to understand Phillips, and in coming to understand that there are other possibilities in his position which he could have developed, but has not.

Rorty says that there will be no general criteria for "really talking about" which will be of much help in settling the question of what "really exists":

> Really talking about X is not the same as talking about a real X. "Really" here is just a matter of "placing" the relative ignorance of the person being discussed in the context of the relatively greater knowledge claimed by the speaker.[18]

With respect to the existence of God this is the move which the reductionist makes. He says, "These people think they are talking about a transcendent God but they are really talking about X"--and a good many candidates have been offered as "X". It would be very curious for Phillips to argue this way since he has explicitly rejected this sort of reductionism.[19]

Rorty points out that "...in the sense in which the use of the term refer is governed by the inference from '"N" refers and N is O' to '"N" exists (is not a fiction)' then of course one cannot refer to fictions".[20] But he goes on to say the following:

> ...(T) the quest for a theory of reference represents a confusion between the hopeless "semantic" quest for a general theory of what people are "really talking about", and the equally hopeless "epistemological" quest for a way of refuting the sceptic and underwriting our claim to be talking about non-fictions....The first demand is, roughly, a demand for a decision procedure for solving difficult cases in historiography, anthropological description, and the like--cases where nothing save tact and imagination will serve. The latter demand is for some transcendental standpoint outside our present set of representations from which we can inspect the relations between those representations and their object.[21]

If this is at all right, and I think it is, it puts Phillips in the curious position of having disavowed the "epistemological" move as a mistake, yet of using a philosophical notion which presupposes it. Unless supplemented by some other notion, senses (a) and (b) of "refer" lead one back to a view of words as names. This is certainly the way Phillips is read by Hick, Keightley, et.al., and there is much in his work to support their reading. But I think that there is also another tendency in his work, one which he himself has failed to realize the depth and importance of. I would like to approach this aspect of his thought by again contrasting his views with those of another, in this case a theologian who wants to both deny that God is an existent among existents and deny the

conclusion that God is a language-game.

Bishop John A.T. Robinson has questioned the need for traditional theistic discourse and has, like Phillips, been branded an atheist for his trouble. But Robinson does not question the referential nature of Christian talk in the way in which Phillips does. He says that

> ...if God-statements are only statements about man...if... language about God can be translated into language about man without remainder, then...you've really given up talking about the reality for which the word "God" has traditionally stood.[22]

Phillips, of course, would agree that reductionism of the sort envisaged here is not valid, just as he would deny the claim that God is a language-game if read as a claim of identity, for believers do not "talk about" themselves (Rorty's sense (b)) when they speak of God (sense (b) again). But Robinson goes on:

> For this reality has always been seen as that to which any human commitment and concern is simply response. "God" does not refer to the commitment but to something that hits you, meets you, surrounds you with a grace and a claim from which you cannot finally get away.

There may be deep differences here, but given that we ignore "refers", or read it in some way other than Rorty's sense (a), Phillips might well assent to this, too. The issue is what one is responding to. Robinson goes on:

> Consider these typical religious statements:
> "Thus saith the Lord"
> "Abba, Father"
> "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He first loved us"
> These are not simply statements about human attitudes; they are responses to how things are seen to be, to that in which human life is grounded--viewed not simply as an impersonal regularity but as claiming one in freedom and responsibility, not simply as an "It" but as a "Thou". It is this, as the ultimate truth about reality, that God-language is affirming.

Robinson seems to think that either Christianity talks about the other than human in something very like a referential way or it can be reduced to human attitudes and talk about human beings; to this extent he stands with Hick and he and Phillips pass each other by. The question is whether he touches something very deep in Christianity in holding this, or whether

Phillips' talk about religion expressing something (human attitudes?) is closer to the mark.

Phillips has implied that the philosophical task is to explain the origin of religious concepts:

> Difficult though it undoubtedly is, the task facing us is precisely that of trying to reveal the grammar of religious beliefs in relation to the human phenomena out of which they grow...we must ask what worshipping an eternal God means in the way of life in which it has its life.[23]

But it is crucial whether one describes these "human phenomena" in religious terms or some other--and even this is often a matter of degree. Traditionally theologians and philosophers have spoken of "religious experience" as something particular and peculiar. Ramsey's disclosures were very much akin to other offered experiences of this sort. Phillips, on the other hand, has little to say about this kind of experience. He seems to think that religious concepts are the result of a kind of contemplation of the world and man's contingency in it: they are a response to the fact that the world is, but say nothing of how it is. They do not refer, but are expressive. In so far as those who speak of "religious experience" have sought a ground or justification for religious belief and language in the purity of "direct" experience Phillips is right to oppose them. But is this all they have done? Robinson again:

> ...to believe in God is to affirm that at the heart of things, as the most real thing in the world, is a love and a purpose to which persons and personal relations are so far, the highest response. This is the way the grain of the universe runs.[24]

This seems to put religion and science right back into competition, and talk of the "most real thing in the world" sounds decidedly Platonic. Still, it is important in the tradition, and we must remain open to the possibility that Robinson is not expressing his point well, but that he is on to something. As Norman Kemp-Smith has pointed out, "...by the Divine we must, at least, mean that upon which all things rest".[25] If there are other possibilities for an account of religious discourse it seems that they might be opened through a consideration of what Phillips could mean by "expressive". Without such new possibilities we face a dilemma: either religion must give up any attempt to speak about "how

things are" beyond the human community--must give up any hint of reference (sense (a)) for the term "God"--or it must once again be offered as in direct competition with scientific theories.

The consequences of choosing the second horn of this dilemma are, I think, well known. Phillips has not always been terribly forthright about the consequences of adopting the first horn. Too often he has fallen back on Wittgenstein's remark that the philosopher "leaves everything as it is" as protection. But his account

> ...has implications not only for what philosophers and theologians have said at a second order about the grammar of first order religious language, but also about the levels of authentic and inauthentic religion in the scriptures and tradition itself.[26]

Witness St. Paul's meditations upon the Resurrection, which include the following:

> If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men to be most pitied.[27]

Phillips glosses this by saying

> St. Paul connects the possibility of resurrection with dying daily. Christianity has, at its centre, a Cross--a divine self-renunciation. It is by dying to this world that the Christian finds the possibility in Christ of being glorified, transformed, raised up.[28]

But this is inadequate, for Paul saw an event as implying that something else would happen, and this clearly goes beyond the limits of religion which Phillips would seem to authorize. It seems that Phillips must be prepared to divide the tradition itself into first-order religion and second-order reflection, for Paul's remarks are part of the canon of Christianity. This alone seems good reason to be suspicious of any attempt to "save" religion from science at the expense of it becoming unrelated to "how things are". One cannot sweep aside one whole side of the tradition and still "leave everything as it is".

Such considerations have led Antony Flew to claim that Phillips has "...outlined a religion which is his own, and superior to most of the competition",[29] but which is not Christianity. This may be a bit over-

stated. There are certainly precedents in the Christian tradition for most of Phillips' claims--St. John of the Cross, Kierkegaard, and Simone Weil being his favorites--but even with these thinkers it is not at all clear that they would license the conclusion that God is a language-game (understood as outlined above). It is time now for me to try to spell out what I think the other possibilities are which, as it were, lie dormant in Phillips' work, and I will attempt this in the next section.

(ii) The "other" D.Z. Phillips

Can it be that so many have been misled in supposing that the Christian speaks of a God who is other in something like a referential way? The theologian Karl Barth speaks of God as "the Wholly Other", and we have seen that this notion of otherness is important in Christian theology. "My ways are not your ways." It is part of the grammar of our talk about atoms that atoms are not "part of the language-game" if that would license either the conclusion that we can do what we like with atoms, or that atoms do not exist independently of us. Likewise, the Christian says that God will exist after heaven and earth have passed away and that He is beyond human control. "The spirit goeth where it listeth." Phillips has not given, at least on the dominant reading of his work, an account that can allow for the fullness of the Christian conception of God. In this section I want to sketch out a position which Phillips approaches but never realizes, and which is superior to that so far discussed as an account of Christian grammar, and more in line with our intuitions about what the believer claims.

We have seen that Phillips contrasts the notions of reference and expression, and that the notion of reference is a term of philosophical art in tension with much else of what Phillips says. We have an immediate tendency to read the contrast between reference and expression as based on the distinction between fact and value, and as placing religious belief in the latter category. Facts are what is "really there", values are our responses to what is really there. But we have also seen that Phillips wishes to deny that these are the only available categories. He offers us no others, and that is a real weakness in his work. But

it does seem that he glimpses, however dimly, other possibilities. Witness the following:

> Since God is in fact not seen, and since anything that is in fact seen cannot be God, belief in God cannot be what it appears to be. This argument, handed down in Hume's legacy, is not, however, the only possibility....We have argued for other possibilities. When these are recognized we see that religious expressions...are not referring expressions. These activities are expressive in character, and what they express is called the worship of God.[30]

This is curious since Phillips is most often read as arguing with Hume: since God is not in fact seen, and since anything seen could not be God, belief in God cannot be what it appears to be (referential), but is something else (expressive). Why does Phillips reject this argument if he means to use it to show that God is a language-game? He is not obviously consistent here.

Renford Bambrough has said that

> ...to suppose that all theology...must be elucidation of internal properties ("grammar") if it is not to be understood as the devising and testing of hypotheses, is to play into the hands of positivism. Wittgenstein himself made no such mistake.[31]

This is really a worry about how one applies the notion of grammar. It seems that Phillips has tendency to oppose "grammar" and "substantive truth" in a way which Stuart Brown has put as follows: "...in holding that the rules of grammar are 'arbitrary' Wittgenstein was...ruling out as nonsensical any construction of them which represented such rules as substantive truths".[32] But what is involved in the notion of "substantive truth"? If one includes as "substantive" any claim with a bearing on how things are then this leads straight to the view that God is a language-game. On such a view Phillips' "expressive" position is only different from R.B. Braithwaite's brand of empiricism,[33] wherein religion is seen as a series of moral aids, on the sole point of translatability into other terms. This is inconsistent with Phillips' criticism of Braithwaite as an "unconscious reductionist" for using the Humean argument quoted above.[34] It seems that at times Phillips has a tendency to think of grammatical claims as if they were analytic and to presume that

only hypotheses can be about how things are, contrary to what I have argued for in Chapter Two. If substantive truths are truths which can be known, then grammatical claims are not substantive, for doubt and justification are out of place; there are no tests here in the way there are for straightforward factual claims.

But we need to recognize that there are many ways the world is and that every true description captures one of them.[35] There are also many different kinds of factual claims; physical facts, psychological facts, sociological facts, and even religious facts. Fact-stating is not, I hold, a very useful basis for making out the differences between these sorts of discourse. If we follow Brown and call grammatical claims true and false, remembering that the boundaries between the factual and the grammatical are not always sharp and constantly change, we will not see grammar as cut off from the world. If grammar is part of "our thought", still it is not so in such a way that allows or requires direct comparison with something which is not "our thought". But neither does this lead to "idealism". It is a serious error to conceive of grammar and grammatical claims in Kantian terms, in terms of the analytic and synthetic.

The notion of reference is a complex one, and we have seen that neither of the senses of the term which Rorty identifies is very helpful in dealing with an issue like the otherness of God. It may be that these two senses of "reference" presuppose the fact/value dichotomy and the correspondence theory of truth. I do not know. But we can see that Phillips' warnings about God's otherness not being like that of a physical object are onesided. It is like that in some ways, for the believer holds that God is as out of our control, as little a projection of our wishes as any physical object--indeed, more so. But there are also important differences, and these Phillips has pointed out. Christian claims do not fit the categories which philosophers want to impose upon them, and this is part of why one must "converted" or "born anew": one must learn to understand and appreciate a kind of thinking which takes place in categories quite different from those one is used to. To this

extent religious conversions are an issue of the mind. That they are also an issue of the will and passions is certainly true, but there is no gulf here; part of what it means to follow God's Will is to act, and want to act, in the service of different objectives from those of "the world". Philosophy is an ass when it decides that these objectives are incoherent because they do not follow the logic of its categories. This game is played! If we want to reject a certain way of seeing things we can only responsibly do so on the basis of an accurate account of its grammar, not by squeezing it into our categories and complaining when it doesn't fit.

A final remark on Phillips' use of the notion of "expression". He contrasts this with reference which makes it look as if expression were the getting out of something internal rather than the pointing to something external. We immediately read this in terms of a contrast between fact and value. But it may be that he has in mind a use of "expression" which goes back to the rhetorical tradition, one which is not "subjective" in the same way. Here "...the expression is never merely a sign which points back to something else, something within, but what is expressed is itself present in the expression, eg. anger is present in angry furrows in the face".[36] This may shed some light on how it is that the Prophet delivers the Word of God, and it may cause us to see cases of supposed "word magic" in a new light. But Phillips does nothing to make it clear that he has such a use of "expression in mind", and we can be sorry that he is so vague so often. Still, it remains true that if there is more gold in the Wittgensteinian lode than he has mined, his excavations have made it easier for us latecomers than it might have been otherwise.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. D.Z. Phillips, CofP, p.23.

2. _____, RWE, p.181. It is a Biblical and theological truism, often overlooked or misunderstood by philosophers, that there is no theoretical knowledge of God. See Rudolph Bultmann's "What Sense Is There To Speak Of God?" in R. Santomi, ed., Religious Language and the Problem of Religious Knowledge, Indiana University Press, 1971, p.186.

3. _____, CofP, p.41.

4. _____, CofP, p.38.

5. _____, CofP, p.57.

6. _____, CofP, p.20. See footnote #5, Chapter One.

7. _____, CofP, p.68.

8. John Hick, in R&R, pp.122-3.

9. D.Z. Phillips, in R&R, p.134.

10. _____, FPE, pp.11-12.

11. _____, FPE, p.117.

12. _____, Death and Immortality (hereafter DI), MacMillan, London, 1970, p.55.

13. _____, CofP, p.75. For a theological statement of an overtly similar position on hope see Jacques Ellul, Hope in Time of Abandonment, Seabury, New York, 1973.

14. _____, RWE, p.148.

15. Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Princeton University Press, 1979, p.291, (hereafter PMN).

16. D.Z. Phillips, RWE, p.148.

17. Alan Keightley, WGG, p.136.

18. Richard Rorty, PMN, p.292.

19. Phillips' Religion Without Explanation is supposedly an attack on the presuppositions of reductionism, but it is, I argue, seriously flawed in that it assumes some of the very presuppositions it attacks. See section ii of this chapter.

20. Richard Rorty, PMN, p.292.

21. _____, PMN, p.292.

22. J.A.T. Robinson, as quoted in WGG, pp.58-59.

23. D.Z. Phillips, CofP, p.83.

24. Robinson, op.cit.

25. Norman Kemp-Smith, "Is Divine Existence Credible?" in R&U, p.124.

26. Alan Keightley, WGG, p.137.

27. I Corinthians 15:12-19 for the whole passage.

28. D.Z. Phillips, RWE, p.148.

29. Alan Keightley, WGG, p.159.

30. D.Z. Phillips, RWE, pp.149-50.

31. Renford Bambrough, in R&R, p.19.

32. S.C. Brown, in R&R, p.246.

33. R.B. Braithwaite, An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief, Cambridge University Press, 1955.

34. D.Z. Phillips, RWE, p.130-47.

35. Nelson Goodman, Problems and Projects, Indiana University Press, 1972, p.31.

36. H.G. Gadamer, T&M, p.459.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

> It is not only that historical tradition and the natural order of life constitute the unity of the world in which we live as men; the way that we experience one another, the way that we experience historical traditions, the way that we experience the natural giveness of our existence and of our world, constitutes a truly hermeneutic universe, in which we are not imprisoned, as if behind insurmountable barriers, but to which we are opened. --Hans-Georg Gadamer

(1) Religious experience and conceptions of the world

I have argued for an account of religious discourse as grammatically different from superficially similar enterprises such as science, ethics, and metaphysics, and I have suggested that this difference in grammar is best revealed by a teleological analysis of religious language. A religion such as Christianity is a conception of the world, but not in the way a cosmology or physics is. Neither is it merely a matter of "human attitude". I have not described the Christian or Biblical conception of the world in any detail, but I have tried to give enough theology to make clear where I stand on some particular issues. My main concern has been with the very general questions "What kind of claims are religious claims?" and "How are religious claims related to both other claims and the world?". I do not believe I have said all that is important on these issues, and for this work to be really adequate to its task I would have had to discuss a great many more examples in much more detail.

I have not argued for the thesis that science and religion are perfectly compatible, but for the more limited thesis that they are dis-

tinct species of speech-act and achievement: the scientist qua scientist neither contradicts nor supports in any direct way the beliefs of the believer, nor do the believer's claims complete or compete with those of the scientist. There can certainly be conflict between scientific and religious considerations as to whether a given act ought to be performed, and such conflict has to do with conceptions of what the good in human life amounts to.

The history of Christian religious thought has been closely connected with that of Western philosophy for nearly two thousand years. The picture which we all receive in school of science being liberated from superstition and religion, as dramatically opposed to faith and dogma, is not all wrong. But the men of the sixteenth century did not merely find science and nurse it to health, they created it, too. Or rather, the practice of scientific enquiry was the pursuit of new ends, and the use of new means. In pursuing these ends science became a logically new enterprise, a break with the ways of astrology and alchemy. There is a conception of the world embedded in the practice of science as well as its results. Much of the philosophy of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is apologetics for the ways of science, for methods of quantification and explanation which were thought to rest on an absolute and exclusive epistemological division between fact and value. On these terms religious doctrinal claims have increasingly been seen as different from factual claims and, therefore, as values which are purely human and not "about how things are". I have argued that this picture is too simple, and that not all claims are either factual or nebulously about "values".

Ian Ramsey, as we have seen, takes the question of how religious belief is related to experience seriously. The very way he puts it, however, is different from classical empiricism. He speaks of "sorts" of "empirical anchorage", but gives no very useful explication of what is meant. D.Z. Phillips treats Ramsey as a traditional empiricist out to find a "justification" for religious beliefs from which they inferentially follow. I agree with Phillips that this cannot be done, and that

in so far as Ramsey takes "disclosures" to be such experiences he is mistaken. Disclosures, too, must be tested.

This is not to deny that religious beliefs are dependent upon experience, for without the particular and peculiar experiences of the Prophets, Patriarchs, and great mystics the Christian faith would not be what it is. Phillips speaks of religion "determining" how things are for the believer, but this can be seriously misleading if it means that experience is irrelevant.

> It would be totally abstract to consider that it was not through and in the concrete experiences of our human existence, in domination and in work, and only (in language), that our human understanding of ourselves, our evaluations, our conversation with ourselves, find their fulfillment and their critical function.
>
> One would want to admit rather that every linguistic experience of the world is experience of the world, not experience of language.[1]

The idealist overtones in Phillips must be resisted and rejected. Likewise, we need to purge the word "world" of certain overtones which remain from empiricism, and we can do this through the sort of philosophical critique of justification which Wittgenstein has provided in the private language argument and in his critique of doubt in On Certainty. A very full discussion of these issues is well outside the province of this thesis, and my remarks on these matters have necessarily been brief and summary. Still, I hope I have made clear just how it is that I agree with and differ from Ayer, Phillips, Ramsey, and Brown.

It is clear that Ayer thinks that all assertions or statements stand in need of just the sort of justification I think cannot, and should not, be offered. Hence, he finds religious claims meaningless because they cannot be connected to sensory statements (whatever those are) by an inferential chain. Neither, of course, can much else, and that alone should be grounds for suspicion of Ayer's account. Still, we must allow that the positivists' arguments did have the beneficial effect of focussing attention on different sorts of claims, and were a valuable stimulus in that way.

It is not clear whether or not Ian Ramsey's "disclosures" are an attempt to find the same sort of justification that Ayer was after. His quest for an "empirical anchorage" makes us look to "direct" or "nonlinguistic" experience, but he may not have meant this at all. He nowhere speaks of "evidence", and his discussion of models and qualifiers is illuminating, if incomplete. In fact, "incomplete" is really my judgement of Ramsey, and it is hard to know what to make of much that he says. "God" can be treated as an "integrator word" quite usefully, at least as far as recognizing that religions are very much related to the general issue of how one ought to live in pursuit of a good and full life. But in as much as Ramsey assimilates the term "God" to speculative metaphysics and treats assertions about God as super-explanations, he is misguided. A more fundamental break is required with both rationalism and empiricism than Ramsey is inclined to make, and I have tried to sketch out the basis of that break in Chapters Two and Three.

With Stuart Brown I am, in most respects, in accord, especially as regards his account of how grammatical claims differ from factual ones. But I see no need to link understanding and belief in the way he does, and I also think that the reciprocal influence between factual claims and grammatical ones needs to be emphasized perhaps more than he does.

Finally, with D.Z. Phillips I share a good deal with regard to what religious discourse is not--not metaphysics, not science, not ethics, etc. But I have argued that Phillips himself is too influenced by positivism and empiricism, and that the notion of reference he uses to distinguish religion from science falsifies Christian discourse about God. I have also mentioned the other tendencies in Phillips' work which seem to point in a direction quite similar to that in which I believe the truth lies, and I have tried to show how it is that Phillips fails to make this direction clear.

Renford Bambrough has stated a maxim, which he takes from the work of Frank Ramsey, as follows: "...when a dispute between two parties is chronic there must be some false assumption that is common to the two parties, the denial of which will lead to the resolution of the dispute".[2]

The assumption that religious beliefs stand in need of external justification has plagued much philosophy of religion, as has the further assumption that such justification should consist of empirical evidence or of deductive "proof". I have argued against both these assumptions in this thesis, but their denial does not lead, as I have tried to show in my discussion of D.Z. Phillips' work, straightaway to the truth. We need a deeper critique of our categories than Phillips provides, as well as a more complete description of our knowledge and language. The aspect of Phillips' thought which I most steadfastly want to resist is what I have called his "hard perspectivism", the view that deep differences in grammar cannot be rationally discussed. This is related to his belief that metaphysics is impossible because it rests on a mistake. In Bambrough's words,

> Naked metaphysics is a descriptive account of the nature and ultimate justification of kinds of knowledge, but it may be clothed in the fancy dress of paradoxical ontology, the plain clothes of linguistic enquiry, or the military uniform of logic.[3]

In denying the possibility of such a descriptive account, and especially in denying that we can rationally discuss our differences, Phillips is making the mistake which Nietzsche described as follows:

> You ask me about the idiosyncracies of philosophers? ...There is their lack of historical sense, their hatred of even the idea of becoming....They think they are doing a thing <u>honour</u> when they dehistoricize it....[4]

One of the great and often overlooked strengths of Wittgenstein's epistemology is its historicality. Phillips has "dehistoricized" our conceptual differences into a picture of radically distinct and incommensurable language-games--perhaps even against his better judgement.[5] When "frozen" in this way it appears that disputants over a grammatical issue cannot go on because they lack sufficient common understanding for argument to proceed. But there remains the possibility of connecting things in new ways, of drawing out relations until the other appreciates one's point of view and one's objectives in the sense discussed in Chapter Three. It is, so long as we live, always possible to continue a discussion and in its course to build a common framework and life. This

will involve comparing and contrasting objectives, and perhaps the developing of new ones. Gains in understanding come most profoundly when our categories are stretched and expanded, and we need to keep our picture of human knowledge historical and temporal so that we may see the possibilities for critique and common understanding.

> The fact that it is in the midst of a linguistic world and through the mediation of an experience pre-formed by language that we grow up in our workd, does not remove the possibilities of critique....(W)hen you take a word in your mouth you must realize that you have not taken a tool that can be thrown aside if it won't do the job, but you are fixed in a direction of thought which comes from afar and stretches beyond you. But our human experience of the world, for which we rely on our faculty of judgement, consists precisely in the possibility of our taking a critical stance with regard to every convention.[6]

The extent to which religious thought (and here again I have in mind Christian thought) is itself critical has been overlooked by philosophers. The believer claims to have insights into matters of love, loyalty, even birth and death, insights which justify a different grammar from that of "the world", or common sense. The debate over whether this is so is what has been called "apologetics" and I do not want to enter such a debate now. My point is that philosophers who have concentrated on disputes between scientists and religious authorities have missed this point pretty much altogether, while certain theologians have stressed it to the point of denying that Christianity is a religion.[7] Whether or not they are right, we need to keep in mind that the great figures of a good many religions are critics of what they see around them, and that such criticism is a contribution to the ongoing human enterprise of self-examination in pursuit of the truth and a better life. While it is not enough, it is a good beginning to see the logical and historical complexity of these issues. Only then will we appreciate

> ...how unsatisfactory it is to speak of accepting or rejecting Christianity <u>as a whole</u>. There are too many separate elements in Christian doctrine, each of which raises too many separate questions, each of which is capable of too many distinguishable interpretations, for a man to be able to reveal very much of the nature of his beliefs and allegiences by saying a simple Yes or a simple No to the superficially simple, single question,

"Is Christianity true or false?".[8]

And this holds, I am sure, for all the other "major" religions as well.

(ii) Summary of my position

In this thesis I have attempted to deal with very complex issues in a rather brief way and with a rather broad brush. I realize that this is dangerous and apt to lead to misunderstanding. I have persevered in the hope that some benefits may yet arise, not the least of which is improvement in my own understanding. I will try to put the major planks of my position into brief, propositional form. I have argued that: 1) The question of the existence of God is not an empirical matter; 2) That the grammar of Christian discourse about God is such that it cannot, without distortion, be forced into the categories of fact or human value; 3) That these categories are inadequate for a philosophical description of human language and knowledge, and the notion, taken from Wittgenstein, that there are "grammatical remarks", and that these are not either analytic or synthetic, is a useful way of introducing broader categories than those of fact and value.

Other parts of my position I have not had space to argue for to the extent that I have argued for the above propositions. Nonetheless, the following theses play an important role in this work: 1) There is no one test for meaning or meaningfulness; 2) There can be no external justification of religious beliefs, and the search for some "direct experience" such that religious beliefs could be inferentially based upon this is a misunderstanding based on an inadequate epistemology; 3) When reason is understood in its full breadth and depth it becomes clear that conceptual and grammatical differences, while profound and internally related to our understanding of any matter, are not merely brute and unbridgeable differences between us, but can be rationally discussed; 4) That 2) and 3) are compatible. In arguing that the ends or objectives of a given discourse are not fully statable in the terminology or language of another discourse I hope that I may have shed some light on how it is that one can, qua philosopher, stand back from a linguistic and social phenomenon and thereby see it better, while not yet standing at

that Archimedean point which, from the standpoint of epistemology, is sought from the urge to be more than human.

Given that I have supplied no way of identifying a given claim as religious other than that its being a speech-act said in pursuit of religious objectives, is my position not circular? Well, it turns out, I think, that categories such as "religious" and "scientific" are based on similarities and differences between particular cases, and that these particular cases are what we must turn to and elucidate in order to achieve deeper understanding. I do not care whether a given claim is designated "religious" or not so long as we appreciate its role in a given language-game; and that goes for science and ethics as well. This does not mean that there are no general truths about given sorts of claims, but it is a warning against the all too common philosophical practice of treating such general truths as rigidly literal, as an all-or-nothing affair. And this mistake is very much related to an equally common one of seeing philosophy as a kind of theorizing, a mistake which Wittgenstein saw through, as the following attests.

> "If you will only shake free from your physiological prejudices, you will find nothing queer about the fact that the glance of the eye can be seen too." For I also say that I see the look that you cast at someone else. And if someone wanted to correct me and say that I don't really <u>see</u> it, I should take that for pure stupidity. On the other hand I have not <u>made any admissions</u> by using that manner of speaking, and I should contradict anyone who told me I saw the glance "just the way" I see the shape and colour of the eye.
> For "naive language", that is to say our naive, normal way of expressing ourselves, does not contain any theory of seeing--does not show you a <u>theory</u> but only a <u>concept</u> of seeing.[9]

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. H.G. Gadamer, T&M, p.495.

2. Renford Bambrough, "Principia Metaphysica", Philosophy, April 1964, p.103.

3. _____, Ibid., p.103.

4. Friedrich Nietzsche, The Twilight of the Idols, Hollingdale trans., Penguin, 1968, p.35.

5. Phillips steadfastly denies all such criticism as misunderstanding and misrepresentation, and he has been both misrepresented and misunderstood. But he has really almost asked for this treatment at times, since the vocabulary he uses he almost never explains or explicates sufficiently. As I have said, it is less than clear just what Phillips' position is, and this is a major flaw after several books and nearly twenty years of, he claims, maintaining the same stance.

6. H.G. Gadamer, T&M, pp.495-96.

7. The concept of a religion which supports this latter view is one which sees religions as a cultural phenomenon which amplifies and supports the basic values of a given society. Christianity supposedly does not do this, but submits all values to a radical critique of "the spirit of the world" which any and all societies manifest. Kierkegaard, for instance, has something like this in mind in his polemics against "Christendom". He saw the critical aspect of the Gospel as totally lost in a society which assumed its understanding of Christianity as a birthright.

8. Renford Bambrough, Reason, Truth and God, Methuen, London, 1969, p.100.

9. L. Wittgenstein, Zettel, #223.

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